METRO / A17

Boy, 17, admits killing neighbor, 78; body found 6 mos after

ACROSS / A13

Villagers in Nueva Vizcaya expel employees of Aussie mining firm

NEWS / A16

Young leftist leaders: No regrets about Edsa II, even if GMA 'even worse' than Erap

It's Romney in Michigan; Clinton 'win' not counted

DETROIT—MITT ROMNEY SCORED HIS first major primary victory in his native Michigan, a much-needed win that revived his faltering candidacy and fit-ed wide open the race for the Republican nomination for US president.

Three Republican candidates now have won in the first four states by vote in the

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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FR. JESUS BUDA, OMI
Kidnapping turns grisly

Abus tagged in Tawi-Tawi priest's slay

By the Inquirer Mindanao

COTABATO CITY—LUMBIS RE-forced to be abu Sayyaf terrorists grabbed a Catholic priest while he was praying to a retreat chapel and fatally shot him in the head on a basketball court in Talusuan town in Tawi-Tawi on Tuesday night, police said.

The victim, Fr. Jesu Buda, was director of the Notre Dame of Talusuan and in charge of the mission station there for the last 30 years. He spearheaded local development and education projects. He would have turned 54 on Feb. 5.

Senior Supt. Wahidjie Tesip, Tawi-Tawi police chief, told radio station DXMS here that the killers, numbering about 10, took Buda's companion, identified only as Omar Tesip, as duty first. The hostage is Tesip's relative.

Buda's violent death was the third for his congregation, Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), which works with the poor of central and

'Goodbye, Erap' welcomes Estrada to Inquirer

BREAKING BREAD, MENDING FENCES Ex-President Estrada dines on Tuesday night with Inquirer editors and reporters after turnover ritual and for the 43-month-jail layover he allegedly caused to be imposed on this paper in 1999. Still, he's ate with Mayor Binay (center) at the reception at the Inquirer main office in Makati City.

By Francis Tj. Colina

AS IRONS COMES, NONE WAS AS AWKWARD as what greeted Joseph "Erap" Estrada at the business office on Tuesday night.

In the top of the main building to the newsroom, the first sight that greeted the ex-President was an acrylic glass framed replica of the Page 1 typescript on his ouster from power, one among many from page replicas that adorn the building's third-floor lobby.

"Goodbye, Erap," the banner screamed in bold caps. It was Page 1 of the paper's extra edition dated Jan. 20, 2001, which carried, among others, photographs of Estrada appointing cronies and of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in a jubilant pose, and a long shot of the huge crowd that attended his successor's outstanding as President.

But from where the convicted and pardoned plunderer—who is currently on stock-campaign mode and pleading his case with the people—was standing, it might very well have read

5 suspected plotters held

Villarosa: Am not missing, I have been in Makati Med all this time

By Jocelyn R. Uy, DJ Yap and Marvin Barcelona

MURDER CONVICT JOSE VILLAROSA YESTERDAY said a recovery room adjacent to the Intensive Care Unit of the Makati Medical Center (MMC) was where he had been all along since he left the Near Solihull Prison (NSP) early last month.

Detailed by the Inquirer on the phone, Villarosa said he was recuperating from major lung surgery on Jan. 5. "I think the Inquirer turned out on its pro-fessionalism [when it reported yesterday] that I am missing. I am here at the [MMC]. I had an operation, in which the doctors had to remove half of my left lung," he said in a hoarse voice.

The former representative of Occidental Mindoro claimed that he was diagnosed with lung cancer in December 2006, when he was first allowed to leave the national penitentiary's maximum-security compound to seek medical treatment at the [illegible].

But this was contrary to what then

THERE YOU GO His confinement at the recovery room adjacent to the ICU, according to former Occidental Mindoro Rep. Jose Villarosa.

A ploy to extend term of Esperon, say lawyers

By Nikko Dizon, Lala B. Salazar-Is and Alexis Pupa

SECURITY FORCES HAVE ARRESTED FIVE ACTIVE and dismissed soldiers in what critics described as a government move to raise the threat of a new plot to oust President Macapagal-Arroyo and justify the extension of the term of her military chief as a prelude to a martial law declaration.

The arrests were made on Tuesday afternoon amid claims by Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez that antigovernment forces were out to grab power between today and Tuesday to mark the second anniversary of the Oakwood revolt that ousted Joseph Estrada and installed Ms Arroyo in Malacañang.

The five persons arrested were brought to the Department of Justice yesterday and charged with illegal possession of firearms inherit huge

Michel Pilotf of the Philippine National Police said were to be used to an unspecified "destabilization plot against the government."

They were identified as former Brmd. Ricardo Jpl. Delmundo Valiente, and Corporals Ramon Bedastre Marasan, and Nilden Francisco and Marine Cpl. Edit Agas.

Another active soldier identified as Brmd. Ranger Jpl. Julius Bontuyan, was also arrested in Camp Aguinaldo on Tuesday by elements of the Intelligen-

UNDER ARREST Retired Sgt. Orlando Valencia, ex-Corporals Kim Agas, Nilden Francisco and Rudolfo Marasan (under cap) with their lawyer Trixie Angeles after they are handed to the Department of Justice for an inquest after their arrest by the PNP-CIDG.

Mikey quitting Lakas may signal JDV ouster

By Norman Bordadora, Cl Cabacungan Jr. and Kristine L. Alave

THE PAIN CAUSED BY THE STATEMENTS made by the son of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr. in a Senate inquiry made it easier for Pampanga Rep. Juan Miguel "Mikey" de Ve-nera, a son of President Macapagal-Arroyo, to leave the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats, a leader of the ruling party told the Inquirer yesterday.

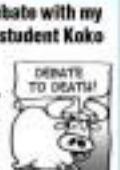
The Lakas official said Mikey had long wanted to leave the party, the largest bloc in the House of Representatives.

The younger De Venecia testified in the Senate late last year that the President's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, had told him to "back off" from a national broadband network project in favor of a Chinese firm.

Jose "Joey" de Venecia III, whose company Amsterdam Holdings Inc. sought to undertake the project, also said Mr Arroyo's

Miriam tells Migz: Debate with my 'apo,' or my brilliant student Koko

By Cl C. Cabacungan Jr. and Norman Bordadora



SEN. MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO yesterday declined a challenge from Presidential Son Jose Miguel "Migz" De-La-Cruz for them to engage in a debate on the government's flagship program, offering instead her former law student or grandchild to stand in for her in the verbal battle.

Palace under fire over airports downgrade

By Cl C. Cabacungan Jr., Dona Z. Pazzibugan and Michael Lim Ubac

SENATORS AND TRAVEL AGENCIES WERE up in arms yesterday over the foreign aviation's failure to address safety concerns in the country's airports that led to a critical ratings downgrade from the US Federal Aviation Authority (FAA).

Sen. Jinkee Arroyo said Malacañang should have planned the ministry where its vessels was by investing more to improve airport facilities, noting that only a measly 2527 million or $12.5 million had been allocated for navigational and safety equipment.

He said that both the Air Transportation Office (ATO) and the Department of Transportation and Communications had known as early as October that the country would be downgraded but had done nothing.

"They stampeded congress to pass the Civil Aviation Authority Act with practically no debate as they wanted us about the downgrade. Sad, FAA downgraded us. That is the picture, that is the sad result," said Arroyo.

Senators have warned about the ill im-

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

6/23 FOUR DIGIT
1 14 | 9 4 8 1
Wednesday's results:
5 6 6 | 9 8 2

MEGALOTTO 6/45
18 15 16 19 29 33
₱9,690,271.20

Miriam, too, favors RP-Japan pact

But she sets conditions for Jpepa ratification

By Dona Pazzibugan

ADMINISTRATION SEN. Miriam Defensor-Santiago yesterday said she would propose a conditional Senate ratification of the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (Jpepa).

Santiago, who chairs the Senate committee on foreign relations that reviewed the treaty, said the ratification should be conditional on an exchange of diplomatic notes between the Philippines and Japan governments stating the supremacy of the Philippine Constitution over the treaty's provisions.

Santiago said she will sponsor the treaty in the plenary when the Senate resumes sessions on Jan. 28.

Sen. Manuel Roxas II, who chairs the Senate committee on trade and commerce, said the other day he was advocating the Jpepa's ratification as the Philippines stood to lose more by rejecting it.

Roxas, whose committee came up with a report recommending passage, said he was hurting the issues concerning the legality and constitutionality of the treaty up to Santiago's committee.

Santiago and Roxas launched a Senate review of the Jpepa last year amid the uproar over the agreement which is being opposed by environmentalist and nationalist groups.

Santiago said she was concerned over the Jpepa's provisions granting national treatment and most favored nation (MFN) status to Japanese investors. This would mean giving parity rights to Japanese investors, which would be a violation of the Constitution.

"The process of Senate concurrence will be two-fold, consisting of an exchange of notes between the two governments, and passage by the Senate of a resolution expressing conditional concurrence," she said.

The "exchange of notes will contain the shared understanding of both governments that Jpepa is consistent with their respective Constitutions," with particular reference to the Jpepa provisions on the grant of national treatment and MFN status, she said.

Constitutional

The proposed Senate resolution for conditional concurrence would "contain the condition that Jpepa will not violate the Philippine Constitution relating to the rights of any person to acquire or dispose of immovable property, public or private," Santiago said.

"It is important that the Senate concurrence resolution should clarify that any Japanese investment in our country should be made in accordance with the requirement of Philippine law," she stressed.

Because of the diplomatic process and the foreseen debates on the contents of the resolution, Santiago said the Senate would likely finish the ratification process just before Congress nears adjourns on March 20.

Santiago said she is reconciling the reservations that Sen. Francisco Tatad and other senators have on Jpepa's provisions on the practice of professions, constitutional provisions, and provisions on customs duties that have to be clarified so the country would not be at a disadvantage.

She said the resolution would also "explicitly" contain provisions for funding of "safety nets" and other intended administrative measures to prevent affected sectors.

A coalition of militant groups yesterday denounced Senate for supposedly conditioning the public vote accepting the inevitable ratification of the Jpepa.

With a report from Jerome Aning

SCHOOL TOUR
President Macapagal-Arroyo waves to students of the Albert Elementary School in Manila during a visit yesterday. She was accompanied by Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando (right), Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim and Education Secretary Jesli Lapus.

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ NAT'L barangay chief sues DILG execs over 'Liga' polls A4

Palace: GMA won't be rushed on Comelec

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE RACE FOR THE NEXT CHAIR OF THE Commission on Elections is heating up, but President Macapagal-Arroyo has apparently set no rush for her choice.

At a press conference yesterday, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye confirmed that the Palace search committee had already submitted to the President the names of five perennial candidates.

"The President is giving this very serious thought," said Bunye, adding that Mr. Arroyo would not be rushed in naming a replacement for former Comelec Chair Benjamin Abalos who had resigned at the height of the national broadband network fiasco on Oct. 5, 2007.

He said his boss would appoint the next Comelec chair "fairly soon" in the aspirations of the original term of Abalos, which is on Feb. 2.

Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo, for his part, called on those pushing for certain nominees not to turn the selection process into a "media battle."

"We must not turn the selection of Comelec chair into a media battle among those for or against certain nominees," said Saludo.

He said the search committee chaired by Reinerio Abes was composed of "respected, upright eminent persons" who "have screened their recommendations to the appointing power after wide consultations and profound deliberations."

The President had asked Malacañang's five-member search committee to recommend Abalos' replacement.

"After the final choice is made, Congress will have ample time before the 2010 polls to review the decision through the Commission on Appointments," said Saludo.

Bunye declined to reveal the five names included in the short list.

"We'll see if we can get clearances to publish this (from the President)," he said.

The acting Comelec chair, Resurreccion Borra, and Commissioner Florentino Tuason are also due to end their terms of office next month.

Bunye neither confirmed nor denied if lawyer Lolita de Lima was among the nominees.

Although the search committee has refused to disclose the names on the list, those rumored to be on the short list are retired Supreme Court Justices Jose Melo and Raul Nicolasa, former Justice Secretary Artemio Tuquero, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño and Legal Network for Truthful Elections co-convener Carlos Medina.

The source said Mr. Arroyo could either select the nine other Comelec commissioners from the short list, or ask that a separate list be submitted to her. With a report from Jocelyn R. Uy

Manero still behind bars

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE EJECTED RELEASE YESTERDAY of convicted priest killer Herbert Manero Jr. did not push through. Justice secretary Raul Gonzalez said he was still reviewing the validity of the good conduct time allowances granted to the said inmate.

According to Gonzalez, Manero may be released "anytime soon" and that he would hand down the results of his review by Monday at the latest.

He said he had learned that Manero's 40-year sentence was commuted to 24 years in 1998 by former President Fidel Ramos (not Defensor-Joseph Estrada, as mentioned) earlier.

Considering that Manero had been detained since 1985, then he has been in jail for 23 years. But Manero was also given good conduct time allowance worth 8 years, 7 months and 15 days. If all these are valid, then it means the inmate should have been released several years ago.

"We are trying to find out whether this is all valid. My chief of staff thinks there are problems here that are lacking ... That's why we are now reviewing whether we can consider all these," Gonzalez told reporters.

He also stated that Manero's original commutation and pardon was canceled earlier because he had a pending case. But he was later acquitted, which may why his commutation order was deemed reinstated and his sentence reduced to 24 years.

Manero's wife Evelyn went to the Department of Justice yesterday accompanied by Public Attorney's Office chief Persida Rueda-Acosta.

Evelyn appealed to Gonzalez for her husband's freedom. But in an interview, she said she was willing to wait since the parole secretary said he would hand down his decision soon.

Manero was convicted of killing trainee priest Tulio Favali in North Cotabato in 1985.

A similar review by Gonzalez of the case of convicted child rapist Sisenando Abrajan led to the rescheduling of his supposed release on Dec. 16 to 2010.

PAINFUL? He was later acquitted, which may why his commutation order was deemed reinstated and his sentence reduced to 24 years.

RP fishing vessel sinks off Taiwan; 15 seamen missing

EKOU, TAIWAN—(UPDATE) seven members were missing Wednesday and 14 others had been rescued, after a Philippine fishing vessel sank off the southern Taiwanese coast, a Taiwanese official said.

Coast Guard spokesman Hsieh Ching-shing said helicopters and one ship dispatched by the Taiwanese government rescued two of the sailors from the Panamanian-registered Sheng Yun 16 factory ship, and nearby cargo vessels saved another three.

"We have asked Hong Kong and the Philippines for more help as the ship was closer to the Philippines," Hsieh said. "Rescuers are still searching for the missing 15 fishermen."

Taiwan's TV said crewmembers were resting in the area where the Sheng Yun went down. The Philippine Coast Guard said six Filipino crew members were rescued by ships passing in the area. Four others were plucked out of sea by Taiwanese and Philippine coast guards. AP

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marie france

FILIPINO HERO
Filipino-American US Army Sgt. Rene S. Lacerna, who died while serving in Iraq, was given full military honors by the US government at the Manila Memorial Park in Parañaque City yesterday. Lacerna received posthumously the Bronze Star Medal, the fourth highest US military award for gallantry in action. US Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney and Brig. Gen. Xavier P. Lesaca, commanding general of the 11th Sustainment Command, Eighth US Army were present along with military representatives from the US Embassy in Manila.

Still no to pardon for Ninoy's killers

By Dona Z. Pazolagan

THE ELDEST CHILD OF SLAIN Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr. continues to strongly oppose the proposed pardon for the remaining 13 convicted ex-soldiers still languishing in jail for the 1985 double murders of Aquino and the alleged hitman, Rolando Galman.

Not telling the truth

Sen. Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III said he believes that the former soldiers are still not telling the truth since they keep on insisting that it was Galman who killed his father on the airport tarmac after arriving from the United States.

Aquino said he believes that the Arroyo administration was only considering pardon to get back at him and his mother, former presidential Corazon Aquino, who sided with the opposition against President Arroyo during the

The Public Attorney's Office recently renewed its appeal for the grant of pardon to the 13 ex-soldiers serving [illegible] sentences at the New Bilibid Prisons, claiming the aging soldiers were critically ill.

Pardon granted

Last year, one of the convicts, ex-corporal Pablo Martinez, was granted pardon on the ground that he has reached the age of 70.

Another convict, ex-sergeant Rolando Tanes, is also up for parole even though he has just served 20 of the 34 years of his sentence for the crime, according to the Board of Pardons and Parole.

"My Christian side tells me to act with compassion," Aquino said yesterday.

Show contrition

"However, in reassessing the issue I ought to do by its rhumb, part and parcel of the sacrament of reconciliation is an admission of sin by the offending party. Those who killed my fathers should somehow show contrition for their faults by telling the truth and asking for forgiveness. This is head of those people to reveal the truth about the assassination of my father is an obstruction of justice, a crime they continue to commit," he added.

He said there were scores of aging convicts who were more deserving of presidential pardon than "they have not been accorded this same treatment as those people who have committed a very heinous public crime."

Achieve political ends

"How can this preferential grant encounter clemency to them but not grant the same to a 74-year-old who was imprisoned for resisting coercion and to the other 123 inmates who are likewise qualified for the same," Aquino asked.

He said the Arroyo administration's grant of pardon "is not an expression of genuine compassion for aged convicts" but "an indication that this administration will use any means to achieve its political ends, even if they undermine the laws they promise our people from criminals who break them."

Kin of Pinay slain in Kabul seek help

THE FAMILY OF A FILIPINO hotel resident killed in a suicide attack in Afghanistan has urged diplomats to quickly repatriate the remains to her mountain village.

Foreign affairs officials identified the woman as Zenaida Agullon, 53, a physician/therapist and the spa supervisor at the five-star Serena Hotel in Kabul that was attacked by Taliban insurgents on Monday.

"Her mother is crushed and inconsolable. We want her body brought back home," Agullon's cousin Shirley Lebeng told Agence France-Presse by phone.

"She is already in her 90s and has already been told of the incident," Lebeng said.

Described as adventurous and head-hearted, Agullon left her erstwhile hometown of Sagada in Mountain Province on the hope for her $700-a-month job in Kabul, four months before the Philippines imposed a travel ban to the country.

Her brother, retired teacher Hermogenes, and four other adult siblings tried to dissuade her from going but to no avail. Her cousin said.

"She wanted to travel, to be on her own," Lebeng said, adding that Agullon had previously worked in Taiwan and in the Middle East.

AFP

Kuwaiti firms investing $10B in RP

KUWAIT—KUWAIT FIRMS, including logistics provider Agility, plan to invest more than $10 billion in infrastructure projects in the Philippines, the company's leading the group said on Tuesday.

The firms and one non-Kuwaiti company aim to develop airports, ports, railways, power stations and telecommunications, Kuwait investment firm Al-Ahlia Holding Co. said in a statement.

The deal is expected to be signed with the Philippine government at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland later this month, Mrq. deputy chairman Sameer Nasser Al-Hamein said.

Atienza questions Roxas LP presidency

By Margaux C. Ortiz

THE LIBERAL PARTY CONTINues to be divided with the faction led by Environment Secretary Lito Atienza filing a case with the Commission on Elections to question the election of Senator Manuel Roxas II as president of the party.

Atienza and his faction are seeking to stop Roxas from "declaring his group's acts as the true LP" and from declaring the newly installed LP president" and stop him from choosing some of others.

Hachib Cato-Alonzon, one of the petitioners, said the case was being filed to "address the separate issue to us" during the Nov. 26 party elections conducted by the rival faction led by Franklin Drilon which "denied us a chance to be heard."

Robert Ramos, media director of the LP's youth wing, claimed that the legal move was not meant to go against the Supreme Court's 2007 resolution upholding Drilon's leadership of the party.

"We are not contesting Roxas' [election] per se. He would have won anyway because we believe he is it," Ramos said in a phone interview.

What they are contesting was the election of the remaining members of the Roxas faction were practically "kept out," he said.

"The Drilon faction] announced in the media that they invited everyone but they made it sure members were not able to exercise their right to vote," Ramos said.

He said Quezon City Rep. Mark Enverzar, recognized as the LP's media director, was only designated as a guest and not as a party official.

Councilor Aleem Bantal, a member of the party's National Executive Council Direct, who heads one of the LP's allied sectoral organizations, was also designated as a guest.

The LP split on July 6, 2007, when party members endorsed several Others, the then Senate President, called on the President to resign.

It was a separate election conducted by the Atienza faction in March 2006, Atienza replaced Drilon as party president. Michael Defensor, the then presidential chief of staff, was also designated LP secretary.

The Supreme Court, however, upheld Drilon's election to govern the LP until November 2007 and the validity of the amendments to the party's charter that he introduced in 2006.

Corrections

IN THE JAN. 11 ISSUE, an article on Page A16 — "Black Nazarene dvds to raise challenge to Oryzelf"—misstated that the Catholic Church celebrated the 400th anniversary of the Feast of the Black Nazarene in 2006. That year, the Church celebrated the 390th anniversary of the Feast of the Black Nazarene.

* * *

IN THE JAN. 12 ISSUE, a front-page story—"Johnjay escapade scatches release of priest's killer?"—misspelled the surname of the former representative convicted of raping a child in 1996. His name is Romeo Talimpos — not Johnjay.

* * *

IN THE JAN. 11 ISSUE, a front-page article—"The Balik Scientists, home to where the heart is"—erroneously identified the school where physicist Alfonso M. Alfonso is based. He is based in Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania... not Stony Brook University in New York.

* * *

THE NOVE ARTICLE misstated that immunologist Eduardo A. Padlan is affiliated with the US National Institutes of Health. Padlan is no longer connected with the agency.

* * *

THE SAME ARTICLE also mistakenly identified the school where Daniel C. Pecklay Jr. earned his bachelor's degree. Pecklay got his civil engineering degree from the University of the Philippines in Diliman — not Kalinga-Apayao State College.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for corrections of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 185 Building, China Bank Avenue corner Sheridan Street, Mandaluyong City, 1550; fax 897-67-93/96; e-mail address, dayde@inquirer.com.ph.

Complaints about lack of coherence or objectivity may be sent to Letitia Eldon Tiol, readers' advocate, e-mail address, readersadvocate@inquirer.com.ph; phone Eat Nos. 897-67-93/96, 632. Readers' editor's phone. The phone number is 897-0808 Local 542.

Mike A's bid to quash journalists' case junked

By DJ Yap

JOURNALISTS WHO SUED THE President's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, for damages over alleged press freedom violations scored a legal victory after a Makati court junked Arroyo's motion seeking the dismissal of the case.

But they also suffered a setback when Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 143 Judge Jesusita Gulapa-Lagsilbo dismissed their motion to quash a previous court order requiring the media practitioners to personally sign the stories they wrote about Arroyo.

In an order dated Dec. 19 but released only last week, Lagsilbo denied Arroyo's omnibus motion to dismiss the case on the ground of "illegality."

The Makati RTC judge also partially granted the journalists' omnibus motion that asked the court to reconsider its Oct. 11, 2007 order requiring the signatures.

The case can finally move along," Kerry Hoque, lawyer of the complainants, told the bosses.

Last May 30 journalists and three media organizations filed a P112-million class suit against Arroyo in the Makati RTC, accusing her of violating their constitutional rights to free expression and free press.

The suit, which the journalists called a "social experiment," accuses Arroyo of abusing his right to file libel suits and of curtailing press freedom.

In her order, Lagsilbo affirmed her earlier decision granting Arroyo's motion for production, writing that the complainants' motion for admission, as part of his affirmative defenses, a legal proceeding which could lead to the dismissal of the case.

"In passing on a motion for discovery of documents, the Court should not be blind to the fact that whether or not the documents are relevant to the subject matter of the action," the judge said.

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Well Milled Rice	P21-32	Bisg (grass)	P44-70
Presyo sa Metro Manila at sa Puerto Prinsesa, Zamboanga del Norte, Masbate, Maguindanao, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Mountain Province, Lanao del Norte, Camarines Norte, Batangas, Zamboanga Sibugay		Angelahya	P45-65
		Repolyo	P15-45
		Carrot	P40-70
		Kalabasitas	P40-60
		Presyo sa palengke sa Metro Manila	

BUTIN ITP: Magpadala ng katanungan, Mag-[illegible]

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DA Bureau of Agricultural Statistics

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, January 17, 2008
1st Week in Ordinary Time
Weekday

1st Reading: 1 Sm 1:1-8
Gospel: Mk 1:40-45

A leper came to Jesus and begged him, "If you want, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will, be clean." The leprosy left the man at once and he was made clean. As Jesus sent the man away he severely warned him, "Don't tell anyone about this, but go and show yourself to the priest and for your cleansing bring the offering ordered by Moses, to this way you will make your declaration."

However, as soon as the man went out, he began spreading the news everywhere, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter any town, but even though he stayed in the open areas, people came to him from everywhere.

Commentary:

The publicity that Jesus receives for his healing of the leper is not of his doing. Jesus did not seek the limelight nor did he crave attention. He humbly went about his ministry, his mission to preach and to save, and His fame spread throughout the region.

Jesus desired only that his Father be given thanks for the cure of the leper. Jesus came to serve, and not to be served, as do we. We can see that the only suffering Jesus endured was the suffering inflicted by others, in this way we will make your declaration.

When we do something good for another person, we should expect only that thanks be our remuneration. May we seek only that God be glorified in the good that we do.

Literary rights belong to Jesus Servants, Inc., trading name of Alfredo Adriano Gonzalez (TIN: 101-438-016) 2147 Quezon City, PO Box 2032, Philippines. Tel. (02) 721-0941. Email: info@dailygospel.org. Website: www.dailygospel.org. Permission is hereby granted to reproduce this material for personal use only. Commercial reproduction is forbidden. Author: Fr. Alfredo Adriano Gonzalez, MSP. Assistant Editor: Fr. Jerome Secillano, MSP. Layout Artist: Mr. Noel Sayson. Address: 2147 Aurora Blvd., Quezon City, Quezon City. Email: [illegible]

Rebel officer seeking bail

By Leila B. Salaverria

DEFENSE ARMY MAJ. JASON AQUINO yesterday asked the Court of Appeals to be granted bail while undergoing court-martial.

Aquino's lawyer Francisco Chavez said there was basis only to charge his client with the minor offense of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, and not attempted mutiny.

Aquino is currently detained at Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal while undergoing court-martial for his alleged involvement in the failed February 2006 coup.

During yesterday's hearing of the habeas corpus case seeking Aquino's freedom, Chavez argued that the Pre-Trial Investigation Report (PTIR) that absolved Aquino of attempted mutiny and found probable cause against him for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, should be upheld.

He said the subsequent Pre-Trial Advice (PTA) which reversed the findings in the PTIR was not signed by Armed Forces Chief of Staff Hermogenes Esperon, and thus was not valid.

Chavez added that since the charge of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman was minor, Aquino should be allowed temporary liberty.

Drug firms urged to lower prices of medicines

By Margaux C. Ortiz

AN INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND policy group yesterday said that the persistent practices of pharmaceutical companies would only prevent Filipinos from benefiting from the proposed bill seeking to lower the prices of medicines in the country.

"It is important to pass this law, but this should not be the end of it," Luis Mercado, Oxfam Great Britain country program manager, said in a press briefing.

Mercado said that with less than 30 percent of Filipinos having regular access to medicines, pharmaceutical companies should begin changing their stance and lessen the prices of their products.

In a report entitled "Sweating for Life: Meeting poor people's access to medicines through responsible business practices," Oxfam revealed that the top 12 pharmaceutical companies in the world continue to set prices at levels affordable in rich countries but exorbitant in developing countries where millions of poor people continue to be deprived of proper health care.

"Unless the pharmaceutical industry takes serious action of medicines in poor countries when devising its business strategies, it will see a continuing downward spiral in its growth and fail to meet the needs of poor people," Helena Wood Pamoa, Oxfam policy advisor, said.

In its report, Oxfam also disclosed how the top 20 pharmaceutical companies in the Philippines produce roughly only 36 percent of the total number of brands and yet account for more than 82 percent of the total market share.

Nat'l barangay chief sues DILG execs over 'Liga' polls

By Alexis Romero

THE MAN ACCUSED OF MISUSING P50 million in anti-SARS funds for the barangays has accused officials of the Department of Interior and Local Government of manoeuvring to have him removed from his position as national president of the Liga ng mga Barangay.

James Marty Lim, recently reelected chair of Barangay Dos in Guian, Marinduque, filed the graft and other criminal charges against the DILG officials for allegedly meddling in the provincial Liga elections to favor his opponent, Rolando Tolentino, barangay chair of Barangay Imelda, Guian.

Losing the province's Liga presidency automatically removes Lim from his position as national president.

But Tolentino insisted he won the Liga elections "fair and square" and he is now preparing to take his seat as ex-officio member of the Marinduque provincial board.

Tolentino said he won the Dec. 29 Marinduque provincial federation elections garnering the votes of 5 out of 8 municipal federation presidents.

In his own backyard

"I beat Lim in his own hometown by getting 14 out of the possible 20 votes. So he is trying to claim there was no election. How can that be when it was duly supervised by DILG officials and attended in by Comelec and NGO representatives?" Tolentino said.

Tolentino cited Republic Act 9340, which he said "clearly mandates for all Liga elections to be under the supervision of the Comelec. This is in addition to the claim that Lim frees abusing their powers to disenfranchise, cheat or otherwise manipulate the outcome of the Liga elections."

Tolentino also alleged that in his 10 years as national president, Lim was linked to various irregularities such as the P50 million anti-SARS fund which was allegedly used to buy fire escape ladders and motorcycles instead of medicines.

He cited another anomaly—the P11.2 million Local Government Service Equivalent Fund (LGSEF) wherein P744, was diverted from each of the almost 42,000 barangays and allegedly deposited in Lim's bank account in Guian.

But Lim said that if his opponents have any evidence against him, they should file graft charges against him. "But up to now, no charges have been filed."

He filed the charges before the Ombudsman against DILG Undersecretary for Local Government Austere Panadero, DILG Regional Director Rolando Rafael, DILG Marinduque Provincial Director Merlo O Dreojan and Asst. Regional Director Jonathan Paul Lozano Jr.

Charter change foe

Lim alleged that said the officials manoeuvred to have him removed from his position in time for the 2010 elections.

"They wanted to disenfranchise me so they can position their own votes [in the groups] for 2010 to control the barangays," Lim told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

Lim had also been very vocal in his opposition to Charter change. He ran for Congress last year and lost to former Gov. Carmencita Reyes.

Lim claimed the DILG officials were spited to oust him by meddling in the Liga's recent barangay municipal chapter elections in Guian, Marinduque last Dec. 11.

He said the DILG officials issued several memorandum circulars that "gave unwarranted benefits to a renegade group to conduct an unlawful election."

But in a statement sent to the Inquirer, DILG Region IV-B Director Rolando Rafael welcomed the filing of charges against him.

Rafael said the charges would allow the department the chance to prove the "DILG's actions in relation to the conduct of the Liga elections are only in Guian but nationwide were in accordance with law."

The municipal election, followed by provincial chapter poll last Dec. 29, will culminate in the elections later this month of the national officers.

Lim said the DILG used a series of memorandum circulars in their bid to install their "favored candidates."

He cited a Dec. 6, 2007 memo issued by Rafael that nullified the notice of election earlier sent out by the Liga's municipal chapter president.

Chaos, confusion

He said the DILG also went beyond its supervisory powers when Panadero issued also on Dec. 6 a memo that declared illegal the creation of committees in the Liga's municipal chapter meeting held on the 11th.

Lim said the memo made compliance virtually impossible and created chaos and confusion among chapter officials nationwide considering that the memorandum dated Dec. 6 was received on Dec. 7 and pertained to joint events with a deadline on Dec. 6.

"It's obvious the memo-circulars declaring as illegal the chapter meetings held without DILG supervision and upholding DILG authority to send workers was an attempt to justify intervention [in Liga internal] policies," Lim charged.

He added that the DILG was supposed to be monitoring and supervising only the group's elections and were not supposed to be imposing new rules in the elections.

But Rafael explained that the memo-circulars that Lim is questioning were issued in accordance with Republic Act 9340 which vests upon the DILG the authority to supervise the conduct of Liga elections.

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5 suspected plotters held; critics say it's ploy

First page of 2

Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), his lawyers, Roger Guevarra and Tikkin Cruz-Angeles, told reporters.

Lt. Col. Bartolome Bautista, AFP spokesperson, said he had not received information from superior officers on Buenaglo's reported arrest.

However, a police report says by the inquirers said that Dumaggi had told investigators that he was a driver of a detained Army officer and that he had been told to monitor the movement of Reyenes so enlisted soldiers belonging to a lift the latter's group called Pacu as Sayan. The report did not say that Dumaggi was under arrest.

'Esperanic empire'

"This is part of extending the Esperanic empire," said Guevarra, referring to widespread speculation that Esperon's term as Armed Forces chief of staff would be extended when he reaches the mandatory retirement age of 56 on July 9.

Guevarra said the arrests were made "for the purpose of finding Esperon's desire to extend his term or lay down the scenario for the proclamation of martial law."

"There has been a constant barrage of propaganda and with the arrest of the soldiers, the scenario has finally been completed. The declaration of martial law is imminent," Guevarra told the inquirer in a phone interview.

'Drama'

Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, a former AFP chief of staff, has also suggested that a "drama" was under way to justify the extension of Esperon's term, but Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro dismissed the claim.

Guevarra and Angeles could offer no immediate explanation on why the announcement of Dumaggi's arrest had not been withheld. "They're hiding him," said Angeles, who is also counsel for the other accused soldiers.

Guevarra said he was at the body office on Tuesday night to visit clients involved in the Nov. 29 standoff at the Peninsula Manila hotel when he learned about Dumaggi's arrest.

HIGH POWERED Supt. Michol Filart (left) and lawyer Joaquin Alvar of the CIDG inspect the recovered firearms from Bus Bonor Rangers arrested by the police on Wednesday. The suspects are allegedly linked to the February 2006 coup attempt. EDD CASTRO

Guevarra, who was among several dozen civilians arrested at the Peninsula, said he inquired about Dumaggi but got nowhere.

Angeles said Wednesday's arrests provided the government "extra kind of actual evidence for the declaration to remove."

In a letter-complaint, Filart said two M-16 rifles, an AK-47 and ammunition rounds were seized from the five men arrested by police and army troops on N. Bautista Street, Cubao, Quezon City.

Filart said that the operatives saw a white van and a silver Honda Civic parked in front of the house at 344 N. Bautista St. They then saw a person alight from the Honda and approach two men who got down from the van.

Filart said one of them carried a long firearm wrapped in newspapers. When the trunk compound the men, one of them was inside the house where they seized the two other firearms, all unlicensed.

Rangers dishonorably discharged last year in connection with the failed February 2006 coup.

Nationalization

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Villarosa: Am not missing, I have been in Makati Med all this time

First page of 2

Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) Director Victoro Sinamo told the inquirer at that time. That Villarosa had to be washed to the MMC on the night of Dec. 28, 2007, because he suffered a heart attack and his legs were swollen due to diabetes.

Along with six farmers, Villarosa was convicted in 2006 of the 1997 murder of Eyal and Michael Quintero, sons of his political rival, Senator Orlando Quintero. Gov. Rolando Quinto. His appeal is pending before the Court of Appeals.

On Tuesday, MMC officials and inmates told the inquirer that they had been visiting Villarosa's company for nearly a month now.

She ex-lawmaker was taken to the MMC, purportedly for treatment of pneumonia and high blood pressure, in the second week of December. Later in the month, Justice Undersecretary Ferdi Enriquez told the inquirer that Villarosa had been allowed to move to St. Luke's for further treatment.

Inquiries made on Tuesday to the admitting offices of the two hospitals showed that he was not among the patients.

PET scan

Calls and text messages by the inquirer on Tuesday to the phone of Villarosa's wife, Deputy Speaker Amelita Villarosa, were not returned. She said yesterday that she was no longer using that phone number.

Villarosa said he left the MMC on Dec. 27 for a PET (Positron Emission Tomography) scan at St. Luke's Medical Center. He said he stayed at St. Luke's for only three hours. His wife, a close ally of President Macapagal-Arroyo, said it was fine, not there, hours.

"I leaned back here after the procedure," Villarosa insisted, adding that he stayed at the MMC Executive Center Condo on the fourth floor for five days, after which he was taken to a nearby room that he was now occupying.

Deputy Speaker Villarosa also told the inquirer that her husband was afflicted with lung cancer and had been at the MMC since December.

"I don't know how one can recover from lung cancer," she said, adding that it was "unfair" that her husband would be restricted visiting from the MMC and the two hospitals when he was already at the MMC all along.

"My lawyer done anything that we should be treated this way," she said, and asked that the newspaper acknowledge the mistake.

Told of the negative results of the Inquirer check on Villarosa's presence at the MMC and St. Luke's, she said she could not comment on this. But she continued to stress that her husband was staying at the MMC.

"He had lung surgery and is now in a recovery room," the deputy speaker said. "He is under guard by the NBI? They have their shifts."

She also said she had been advised by lawyer Estelito Mendoza to be careful in giving out details about her husband because of his pending appeal.

Bunye's visit

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye sought to put the matter to rest by visiting the convict at the MMC.

Bunye ate off with a camera man and a photographer from a government station, as well as a copy of yesterday's issue of the Inquirer to serve as proof that the footage and still photos they would take of Villarosa were authentic.

"I think this story is done with," Bunye told reporters outside the hospital after the 15-minute visit.

As he spoke with reporters, Bunye still had in his posture a hospital mask that he was required to wear inside the patient's room. His companions, including Deputy Speaker Villarosa, also had to wear masks.

"He's recovering. No visitors are still allowed to see him," Bunye said when asked how Villarosa was doing. He said he was not qualified to talk about the patient's condition and asked that the family's privacy be respected.

Villarosa is confined in a room near the cardiovascular ICU. Entry is strictly monitored by hospital staff, the inquirer observed.

A staff member explained that the area was the intensive care unit for cardiovascular cases, where procedures like heart bypass operations were done.

Outside, about six men dressed in polo barong stood guard along with a few members of Villarosa's staff. They occupied Room No. 415.

With permission

Bunye said he had sought the permission of the Villarosas and the MMC for the 4:20 p.m. visit, which he said was meant to establish the inmate's whereabouts and belie the report that the latter had gone missing.

Villarosa narrated the sequence of events from his conference in December up to the present, Bunye said, adding that the patient said he had been to the MMC "since then."

Asked if Villarosa had mentioned his five-hour stay at St. Luke's, Bunye replied in the negative.

Hours before Bunye's visit, Cabinet Secretary Ricardo Saludo issued a statement saying the Philippine National Police and the BuCor to "verify speedily the location of prisoner Jose Villarosa."

"And, if he is still out for valid medical reasons, to ensure that he is returned to the [MMC] as soon as his health will allow," Saludo said.

"The Department of Justice should also investigate if there have been any lapses in custodial measures in the handling of the inmate," he said.

No details

The MMC confirmed that Villarosa had stayed in the hospital since December but refused to provide details about his condition.

Dr. Eric Nobila, chief of the MMC patient relations office, replied "yes" when asked to confirm Deputy Speaker Villarosa's statement that her husband had been confined at the MMC.

He also corroborated her statement that her husband's confinement was "continuous," on his doctor's request, to St. Luke's for a procedure that lasted five hours.

"Yes, it came from the patient's wife herself," Nobila said the hospital. "Only the family and the MMC can give information about the patient."

Told that the MMC admitting office said on Tuesday that Villarosa was not among the patients, Nobila said the hospital was not in a position to confirm or deny a patient's presence.

He said the MMC was governed by international protocols on patient rights and observed such procedures strictly.

Citing patient-doctor confidentiality rules and the hospital's code of ethics, Nobila would allow," Saludo said.

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He said the MMC was governed by international protocols on patient rights and observed such procedures strictly.

Citing patient-doctor confidentiality rules and the hospital's code of ethics, Nobila also said he was not authorized to give out details about Villarosa's condition and directed all questions to the NBI.

With approval

Deputy Speaker Villarosa said her husband's trip to St. Luke's on Dec. 26 had the approval of the BuCor and the NBI.

"[He went to] St. Luke's to radiate [the MMC's] findings," she said. "It didn't take long, but [cancer]. He stopped smoking [more than] 20 years ago."

She added that she and her family were hurt by the report on Villarosa's being missing.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez also said Villarosa had been receiving on the MMC since December, and that the inquirer had been given false information.

Gonzalez said Villarosa's wife had requested permission to take her husband to Singapore for treatment, but that he had disapproved the request.

"Villarosa] has always been confined at Makati Med every time he gets sick, for he is allowed because the BuCor hospital is very, very inadequate," Gonzalez said.

He said no court order was needed for Villarosa to be brought to a medical facility in case of an emergency, and that there was no deadline for the ex-lawmaker's hospital stay.

With reports from Lolita B. Soberevia and Christine O. Avendaño

Palace under fire over airports downgrade

First page of 2

"Either we were being fooled by the executive branch or they really don't know the situation," Roxas told reporters.

The Senate passed the law creating the CAA as the overall agency in charge of civil aviation safety shortly before it went on recess last December.

Roxas, chair of the Senate committee on trade and commerce, said the aviation officials then had made no mention of the ISA concerns.

It turned out, said Roxas, that the AFD had received the FAA advisory in July but just urging the AFD to take steps to improve the quality of airports considerable.

'Huge embarrassment'

Roxas vowed to find out which agencies "dropped the ball," saying the downgrade was a "huge embarrassment."

He also pointed out that during the budget deliberations, not one aviation official asked for additional funding not for amendments in the law to address the country's aviation problems.

Roxas said the FAA downgrade had serious implications on the country's travel, tourism and investment prospects not only from the United States but from most other countries as well.

The Philippine Travel Agencies Association also called for a Senate inquiry.

"Somebody must have taken it easy doing the way otherwise the situation would not have deteriorated like this. The government should address this and not only by trying to meet the standards now that it is too late. It should determine what went wrong and what changes have to be made," PTAA president Jose C. Clemente III said the inquirer.

Temporary setback

As a press conference, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye and Sen. Manuel Pamanville, chair of the Senate committee on transportation, said that the downgrading by the CAA could be reversed by next month after it is approved by the bicameral committee.

Pamanville said the approval of the bill by Congress, and its signing into law by President Macapagal-Arroyo, would take care of the level of safety under the Category 1 rating that was downgraded by IFA to Category 2.

But the system and other security upgrades of 84 AFD-supervised national airports in the country can take sometime, they said. There are also three international airports—Iloilo, Mactan and Diosdado Macapagal—with their own management authority.

HOW SECURE IS SECURITY as the country's 87 national airports? A member of the Bomb Detection and Reaction unit of the Airport Police uses binoculars to survey the other side of the tarmac at the Mabo. AFP FILE

Pamanville, a member of the panel that inspected with FAA officials who visited the Philippines last December, said the Category 2 downgrade was just a "temporary setback" that would not affect the economy and existing operations of Philippine carriers.

"Hopefully, before yearend we would be elevated back to Category 1 ... Hopefully, before Christmas [2008]," he said.

He acknowledged that the downgrade would prohibit Philippine carriers from expanding their flights to the US, pending operations in the US.

No effect on passengers

Pamanville also said that the US move had no effect on Philippine airline passengers entering the United States, ruling out any additional immigration and security checks to be imposed on Filipinos.

While the Category 2 rating along with countries such as Bangladesh, Ivory Coast, Ghana and Indonesia, Philippine carriers can continue flying to the United States but only "under heightened FAA surveillance," said a US Embassy statement.

The embassy also advised US citizens flying to and from the Philippines to use carriers from countries that meet international aviation standards.

Blessing in disguise

Pamanville said that the passage of the law would give the new CAA board autonomy to use the AFD's income of some P3 billion a year and upgrade facilities.

He said the downgrade was a "blessing in disguise" because the country will have an opportunity to improve the airports' safety and maintenance system. With a report from Alan J. Alphonso

Abus tagged in Tawi-Tawi priest's slay

Photograph A1

...western Mindanao.

In 1997, Bishop Benjamin de Jesus was killed by unknown assailants in Jolo. Three years later, Fr. Benjie Inocencio was also killed in Jolo.

According to Tesap, Roda was praying with some teachers in the chapel of Notre Dame of Tahuran when the killers barged in at around 8:30 p.m.

"They seized the struggling priest and dragged him outside until they reached the basketball court, Tesap said. One of the intruders pulled a handgun and shot Roda, he added.

Another version

Another version was reported by The Associated Press (AP), quoting Chief Supt. Joel Goltiao, police director of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

It said the gunmen were masks and brought Roda to a speedboat about a kilometer from the school. A police team caught up with them and engaged them in an hourlong gunfight, it said.

"Before the encounter, a gunshot was heard. Father Roda's body was found bathed in his own blood. He died on the spot, Goltiao told the AP report.

He suspected that hostile were responsible, saying they were behind a series of computer thefts at the school where Roda stayed.

Inspiration

Archbishop Orlando Quevedo, OMI, condemned the killing, describing Roda's death as a loss to the Church's campaign to bring peace to troubled areas to the country.

Missionary service

"I do hope that the example of missionary service to the people, regardless of religion, that Father Roy demonstrated in his life will serve as inspiration to us," Quevedo said.

Fr. Ramon Ma. Bernabe, Oblate superior in the Philippines, said Roda had also been at the forefront of development-oriented and education projects in Tahuran.

The town is about 18 hours by boat from the capital of Bongao. Residents traveling in Zamboanga City have to make a stopover in Sabah as no commercial vessel sails directly from Tahuran to Zamboanga. Even a trip to Bongao is very risky.

Tesap said police operations were "ongoing" against the killers, who also abducted Dean.

Death threats

The officer said Roda had been receiving threats from kidnappers since last year. "We had informed him that we would give him personal security but he refused," Tesap said.

Fr. Nito Dagatol, Roda's colleague in the OMI who is based in Bongao, confirmed the threats, saying that the 40s beyond was behind most of them. The terrorist group has been responsible for most of the high profile abductions in certain parts of Mindanao over the past decade.

Another priest, Jonathan Domingo, described Roda in the AP report as a "sound advocate against terrorism and graft and corruption in the province." He always championed the cause of the poor, he said.

"Despite the danger and threats, he (Roda) opted to continue his mission there disregarding his own safety," Quevedo, a former president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, told the bayan.

"I ask for your prayers for his peaceful rest, for the comfort of his family, and the people he so loved in Tahuran," Bernabe said.

MILF condemns killing

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which is engaged in peace talks with the government, denounced the raid.

"We condemn this killing in the strongest possible terms and the Malaysian government should take all necessary action," said Ghazali Jaafar, vice chairman of the group's religious committee.

Roda, who was born on Feb. 3, 1954, entered the Oblate seminary here in 1970 after finishing high school, and was ordained in May 1980 at the Cotabato Immaculate Cathedral.

He took AB Philosophy at Notre Dame University in 1975 and theology studies at Our Lady of Lourdes Scholasticate in Quezon City and at Ateneo de Manila University.

Cotabato roots

Roda was designated parish vicar of the Our Lady of Grace Park in Cotabato City A year later, he was assigned to the Sta. Niño parish in Midsayap, North Cotabato.

In 1982, he was moved to Labuk, Sabah (Malaysia), as school director of Notre Dame of Tahuran and parish priest. Two years later, he became parish priest of Maggat town in North Cotabato then chancellor of Our Lady of Medjugorje parish in Kidapawan City.

From 1993 to 1995, he was parish priest of President Roxas town, also in North Cotabato, under the Diocese of Kidapawan.

Bernabe said Roda never refused any assignment given to him. "In fact, he performed different missions where few people dare," he said.

Roda's remains will be brought to Cotabato City from Jolo (sea) and will be buried at the Oblate cemetery in Tamontaka in Datu Odin Sinsuat, Shariff Kabunsuan. Reports from Andrew Blakken, Edwin Fernandez, Charlie Solaiz, John S. Alipala and Agnes Zonio, Inquirer Mindanao

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'Goodbye, Erap' welcomes Estrada to Inquirer

Front page A1

"Welcome back, Erap."

It was Estrada's first visit to the Inquirer office in 11 years, and he dined and chatted with the editors and reporters well into the night.

Yet the spate of time between these events—during the first, he said, no one paid him much notice—paled in significance when viewed in this perspective. It was also his first visit to the Inquirer office since the 1998 advertising buyout that he instigated against the paper for what he considered its negative reports about him.

For a while, it seemed that the memory of that financial choke hold would quietly slip behind the surprise sprung by the visit.

The opinions that buzzed around the newsroom were divergent. Some editors thought he was making peace with the business and trying to give his plea of innocence a veneer of decency, and some figured he could just be applying one of Sun Tzu's famous tenets: Keep your friends close, your enemies closer.

AND THE GOOD NEWS IS Estrada seems pleased to find, that after looking over the draft of the Inquirer's first edition on Wednesday night, he's not part of the lead news for the day. PHOTO BY NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

Peace makes

Over dinner, the 70-year-old Estrada made still the slight moves toward making peace.

He gamely posed for pictures, even stopping in mid-sentence and getting up from his seat to accommodate photo-op requests. He passed dessert to those around beside him. And he made it clear that he wasn't exactly seeking payback now that he is a free man.

Stop writing that he hates (Mo) Chidambaram, he urged all the good things you did to others and forget all the bad things they did to you," Estrada said, pointing out that he was living a life still very much in the midst of the same people who had "conspired against" him.

And most of the time, it was easy to believe him.

Still, he threw verbal jabs, typical Estrada-banter showing.

Asked about his plans for his coming trip to Hong Kong, where he will stand as godfather in a wedding, Estrada quipped: "How can I have plans when my wife (Former Sen. Luisa Ejercito) will be with me?"

Gathering in Sen. Panfilo Lacson's re-fusal to withdraw from the 2004 presidential election, thus handing the lesser buddy Fernando Poe Jr.'s chances to beat Mr Arroyo, Estrada said his former police chief had wanted a party convention to decide who would run against the subsequent victor.

He expressed disdain for a convention, saying ex-President Fidel V. Ramos had spoiled the very concept in deciding to run for president in 1992 despite having lost in a party convention to Eduardo Cojuangco in 1991.

'I'm innocent'

On the other purportedly made by a group led by then Justice Secretary Hernando Perez for him to leave for a country of his choice and in exchange for him not facing any criminal charges, Estrada said: "I told [government officials], 'I will not leave. I am innocent. Kung puntahan niyo, dadalo niyo na lang sila (If you like, you can put me in jail)."

But then, he said they did: "Tapos, hindi nang tapo-sho."

He added: "Nandoon ka nanu. Si (certain Cayetano) (I wanted to say, "Because's take a joke)."

On the supposed condition for his pardon, that he not run for public office, Estrada declared that there was no such condition.

Besides, pseudo rumors also sing a la UMA on Dec. 20 [2002], 'I will run no more," he said, referring to the 2004 presidential election that Mr Arroyo made almost sure running in the 2004 presidential election.

Naturally, he also spoke of former Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella, who had declined to talk at length about his ex-ally who had initiated his downfall.

But that he was merely pulling his punches.

"Ayaw mad na book," Estrada said, a mischievous smile lighting up his face. "Before the end of the year, labas na yan (It'll be out)."

It seems an autobiography of sorts is in the works, one that will detail the corruption of government officials and name those who had supposedly conspired against him.

It gave him pause

Estrada turned a similar verbal nudge at the Inquirer. Presenting a copy of a full-page ad that he planned to run on Sunday, the anniversary of his ouster, he said the ad would not price "if the Inquirer approves it."

It was the operating one editor need, to sound off on the issue on everyone's mind.

"Mr. President," said the editor, speaking in Filipino, "are you seeking the presidency again? And if you are, would you instigate another boycott?"

It was a reference to the ad boycott that, among others, all but wiped out the Inquirer employees' profit share. "I hope you sure the people have P15,000 each," the editor said.

The remark gave Estrada pause. And then he smiled and passed on the blame to his supporters in show business: "Hindi ko naman talaga kasalanan yun eh. Mga mga show biz ang gumawan nun."

Indeed, during a dinner at the Manor on July 8, 1999, Estrada told movie producers that he would grant their request for tax incentives if they would pull out their ads from the boycott.

And sympathetic Malacañang officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the boycott that the ad boycott also involved all government agencies.

By the end of July 1999, half of the boycott's top 10 advertisers had pulled out.

Forgiveness

"The heaven forgives you," Inquirer editor in chief Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc told Estrada.

But the visitor smiled and insisted that he was not behind the ad boycott. "It was the shows biz people who started it. Sino ba naman (Ikinasin-Bejasa) yun," he said.

He also claimed that the papers managed to get back on its feet after four days "It's no after four days, OK na ulit ang business?"

But Magsanoc quickly corrected him, saying the boycott actually lasted four months. MSB, a report from Ancajas B. Uy

Mikey quitting Lakas may signal JDV ouster

Front page A1

husband had lobbied for ZTE Corp. in exchange for a huge payoff.

GMA-JDV rift

The controversy generated by the testimony prompted Ms Arroyo to scrap the $329-million contract for the National Broadband Network project awarded to ZTE.

Pulanyo Rep. Abraham Mitra, a member of the Nationalist People's Coalition and leader of the administration coalition in the House, said he believed Mikey was still smarting from Joey's resignation.

The arraigning

Mikey's leave from Lakas signalled the "cutting of the umbilical cord" of support between Ms Arroyo and the Speaker, according to Quezon Rep. Dakpyan Bulgar.

"The leave made 13 days before the start of Congress is a signal for Erano to go all out to unseat the Speaker," Bulgar said.

Bacolod Rep. Jose Yulo Jr. said he was surprised if a campaign to unseat the Speaker succeeded

It's Romney in Michigan; Clinton 'win' not counted

From page A6

2008 primary season, setting a nomination fight that lacks a clear favorite as the race moves south for the first time.

The Republican presidential contenders immediately turned their attention to South Carolina's Republican primary on Saturday with still no clear front-runner and Arizona Sen. John McCain facing what could be a make-or-break battle.

The Democratic primary, won by New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, was meaningless because the national Democratic Party is not recognizing the results, following a dispute with the state party about the timing of the primary.

Clinton, the former first lady, won the only top contender on the Democratic ballot on Tuesday. Still, local party counters say she had 55 percent of the vote to 39 percent for uncommitted delegates to the Democratic National Convention.

Democratic candidates vied for support ahead of Nevada's Saturday caucuses after a toned-down campaign debate in Las Vegas on Tuesday night in which rivals Clinton and Illinois Sen. Barack Obama pledged to try to tamp down arguments between their respective camps over ties. The Democratic contest also lacks a clear-cut leader.

Victory of optimism

In Michigan, Romney, a former Massachusetts governor and millionaire businessman, defeated McCain, who was hoping that independents and Democrats would join Republicans to help him repeat his 2000 triumph here. Mike Huckabee, the Baptist preacher and former Arkansas governor, ended in third.

"It's a victory of optimism over Washington-style pessimism," Romney said, echoing his campaign speeches and taking a poke at McCain, the four-term senator he beat. "Now on to South Carolina, Nevada, Florida."

Minimizing the significance of Tuesday's vote, McCain said he had called Romney to congratulate him "that Michigan welcomed their native son with their support."

"Starting tomorrow, we're going to win South Carolina, and we're going to go on and win the nomination," McCain declared.

Huckabee, who was also already campaigning in South Carolina, predicted he would "put a flag in the ground here tomorrow."

He likewise jabbed at Romney, who has poured at least $20 million of his personal fortune into his bid: "We need to prove that winning a president is not just about how much money a candidate has."

39 percent of vote

In Michigan, with most precincts reporting, Romney had 39 percent of the vote, McCain had 30 percent and Huckabee 16 percent. No other Republican fared better than single digits.

Previously, Huckabee had won the Iowa caucuses, and Romney had taken the New Hampshire primary. Romney won the bitterly contested Wyoming contest.

Romney's rise in Michigan gave him the edge over his Republican rivals. He was born and raised in Michigan, where his father was a popular three-term governor as well as the former head of American Motors.

Romney's focus on the economy resonated in a state where the automobile industry is facing difficulties and the unemployment rate is the highest in America.

The economy proved the most important issue for Republicans in Michigan, the state with the highest unemployment rate in the nation and an ailing auto industry. Fifty-four percent of Michigan Republican primary voters picked the economy as the most important issue, while 17 percent picked Iraq, 13 percent immigration and 11 percent terrorism.

A mere 20 percent or less of eligible voters were expected to show up at polling stations across Flint and snowy Michigan, the nation's most depressed in part by the Democrats' run of little to no consequence.

Stakes varied

For the Republicans the stakes in Michigan varied.

Romney needed a Michigan victory the most to invigorate a campaign weakened by soaring losses in Iowa and New Hampshire. He was the only one watching the voting returns in Michigan. His top Michigan opponents, McCain and Huckabee, campaigned in the state earlier in the day but left by afternoon to plant themselves in South Carolina.

Romney won 23 of the 30 delegates to the Republican Party's national convention at stake in Michigan. McCain ended up with six delegates, and Huckabee got one.

Four in 10 voters said Romney's votes factored into their votes, and more than half of that group backed Romney, according to preliminary exit polls from surveys of voters as they left their polling places. He also led among voters who said the economy and illegal immigration were their most important issues, and won among Republicans voting in the open primary.

McCain had an edge with those who wanted an authentic president, and he won among independents and Democrats. But fewer non-Republican voters participated in the Republican primary this year than in 2000 when those voters helped him beat George W. Bush.

Ever more fluid

A month's fruits the state, the Republican race has grown even more fluid as the five states voted over the past two weeks.

Romney was second in Huckabee in the Iowa caucuses and to McCain in New Hampshire's primary while Huckabee dropped to third. Actor-politician Fred Thompson is camping out in South Carolina looking for his first win. Rudy Giuliani is doing the same in Florida, which votes Jan. 29.

The former New York mayor got only 3 percent of the Michigan vote, and has not fared better than fourth in any of the states so far. Yet, the fractured Republican field plays into his strategy of lying in wait—and making his move—in Florida in the run-up to Feb. 5 when some two dozen states vote.

National polls

Before losing in Michigan, McCain led in national polls of Republicans after his New Hampshire victory six months after his campaign nearly collapsed.

A national USA Today-Gallup Poll, released on Tuesday showed McCain with 33 percent, followed by Huckabee with 19 percent and Giuliani with 13 percent. Romney was in fourth place with 11 percent.

Michigan does not typically hold its primary until February but state party officials scheduled it earlier to try to give the state more say in picking a president.

The Republican National Committee objected and cut the number of Michigan delegates to the national convention by half as punishment, while the Democratic National Committee stripped the state of all 156 delegates to its national convention. AP

ROMNEY

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OPINION

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Why the secrecy?

EDITORIAL

WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND THE SECRECY THAT now surrounds the selection of the next chairman of the Commission on Elections like a death shroud. It is President Macapagal-Arroyo's responsibility to make the appointment, and nothing in the law required her to form an extraordinary search committee to pre-select the most qualified candidates. But now that the search committee has forwarded to her short list of recommendations, it doesn't make sense to keep a sepulchral silence.

Why should the names on the short list be hidden from the public? The search committee, made up of former National Citizens Movement for Free Elections chairman Jose Concepcion Jr., former Finance Secretary Vicente Jayme, long-time labor leader Democrito Mendoza and newspaper columnist Carmen Pedrosa, and chaired by Palace official Bernardita Abao—has declined to make the nominees public, on the ground that it is up to the President, as the appointing authority, to reveal them.

The Comelec spokesman, James Jimenez, said the secrecy could be strategic. "My fear is that the choice might be politicized," he told reporters the other day. "It is inevitable that some people will move heaven and earth to get their favorites elected."

This seems reasonable enough—until we examine the assumptions behind it. The process is not election, but selection, by the President herself. Jimenez's "fear" posits the possibility that President Arroyo can be swayed by political reasons, as though she weren't the country's preeminent source of political reasons, the leading expert in the science of moving heaven and earth.

The President created the committee in the first place because she recognized that the public mood required it. She did not have to, but she must have realized that naming a replacement for the most controversial Comelec chairman in recent history (a calamity she herself caused) required that she accept greater commitment to herself. Hence, the search committee. Hence, the short list.

However, there is one thing missing: a public and irresistible commitment on her part to honor the recommendation of her own search committee. Hence, the secrecy.

By refusing to identify the names on the short list, the members of the search committee may have unwittingly allowed themselves to be used by Malacañang in an elaborate public relations game. In the language of the young, the President scored "pogi points" when she formed the committee; to fail to choose from its short list—a possibility made real by the lack of transparency in the process—means the game was not only elaborate, it was exclusive. It was all about the PR.

Are we being unreasonable? Well, consider the President's track record in naming controversial election commissioners, including Benjamin Abalos and Virgilio Garcillano. Indeed, consider the last appointment. After handing the Comelec a short list of nominees, the President last November proceeded to appoint a trial judge from her adopted hometown of Pigcan City. The choice of Mendiemar Maravilloso was an unpleasant surprise, for two reasons: he is alleged, by the likes of Sen. Panfilo Lacson, to have close ties to Garcillano, and he was not on Malacañang's own list.

The secrecy over the contents of the search committee's short list of nominees, therefore, is worrying. It tells us that, even after the President has recognized the ugliness of the public mood and moved to allay it by forming a search committee, she still does not outlaw that public anxiety begins with the election system's lack of transparency.

The revelations from the ongoing revision of ballots in the election fraud case filed by Aquilino Pimentel III of the opposition against Jose Miguel Zubiri of the administration before the Senate Electoral Tribunal are a painful reminder of a fundamental truth: fraud takes place away from the light, in the dark corners of our ramshackle democracy.

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Piranha frenzy

VIEWPOINT

Jean L. Mercado

"WE SPEND ABOUT P1,000 FOR EVERY CHILD in this country," an education department official said at a recent Region V meeting. "The international average spending, when converted, is about 197,000. Many other countries spend more than P 100,000 for each student."

So, is that more? We've always ranked last on our EDCOM lists for public spending on many fronts, be it schools or health. Of 82 countries that took the Third International Mathematics and Science Test in 1995, for example, the Philippines limped in to No. 29—just above Rwanda, Sri Lanka and South Africa.

Yet there's where the smallest amount per pupil: $358 (purchasing power parity), as earlier Philippine Human Development Report observed. "Thailand which sets near the median spent more than six times as much per pupil," and topnotcher Singapore allocated $1,560.

"The Philippine math average was only 56 percent of world average," EDCOM added. "In science, the score of Filipino children in lower secondary school were below the international median by 77 percent."

In the fourth IMEC we were a notalecript 38th country (out of 38). Hmm. Why so low, indeed? The seventh IMET drill? And we really haven't moved out of the cellar.

That's been true too with national tests. When ill-educated Jeb Bush, as hundreds do, swooned in sympathy Pinoy device. Instead of tough reviews, we've been "promoted" from grade, forcing "A New Math: 37.5 = 75."

True, there's this comfort in Mark Twain's wisecrack: "I never let schooling interfere with my education." Or (though what kids outthink—and misery. "We have top dress in hands." Or listen to the inventive steps. Simple, pinpoint and accurate remedies Bonanza one-liners.

In the post World War II effort to wipe out hookups, schools got about 30 centavos out of every ten peso. This shrivaled during the Marcos dictatorship, even as population crept. Foreign borrowings lolled and corruption metastasized. School budgets then dipped to 4.2 percent for its schools.

Congressmen, who've stashed an additional P1.1.2 billion in pork for themselves in the public works budget, aren't will even that Philippine GDP per capita is already lower than the East Asian average. That lets have greater already low spending per pupil.

Now here! The United Development Bank just released a comparative study of real per capita income in Asia and the Pacific. The 2005 International Comparison Program says, for instance, that Malaysia's real per capita GDP is 2.5 times bigger than the Philippines'. Brunei's GDP is 4x the size of that Negrito.

This is not a bleeding heart's argument for throwing more money at schools. Rather, it is a hard-nosed fact that economists have proven: education is the escape hatch from poverty. In a study of regional poverty, Jeremie Jadresson of the IP School of Economics found that "the rate of poverty incidence falls by three percent for every one percent improvement in functional literacy."

"Our consciousness need it," Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman said in an indirect admission that the Senate had shelved the P13.5-billion deficit into the budget. "We merely realigned items." That would figure around the constitutional ban against increasing budgetary ceilings set by the President.

Many compromises are like piranhas. A Filipino saying, Philippine mass-tivates Homer, there is little hope that congressmen will yield to former Sen. Franklin Drilon's plea to restore their pork barrel. They'll go after those public works like pre-Civil War Negro slaves grabbed naked pork for themselves from barrels rolled out by their masters. The New York Times' William Safire once wondered.

Can that racism survive schools that are locked into perpetual crisis. Semi-overworked, under-trained teachers to serve muddled textbooks and schoolrooms shortages? This seems to be the heart of our officials' concerns.

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Justice

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I REMEMBER AGAIN THE JOKE THAT HITS the Philippines like the hottest crime-response time in the world. In the United States it takes five minutes for the police to be at the scene of a crime after it's reported. In the United Kingdom it's three minutes. In the Philippines, it's immediately. Immediately the crime is reported, the police are there.

I remembered this after Raul Gonzalez explained his advisory threatening journalists with jail if they interfere in police operations, an advisory the International Committee for the Protection of Journalists has bitterly assailed. He likened it to a police line that says "Do not cross," or as he himself puts it, that says, "Forbon" the probably will sings that song). "Will the media cross that?" he demanded. "I mean that answered that. Will that harness chilling effect [on media]?"

There's a killing in his analogy. In the first case, you know a crime has happened and the police are investigating it. As elements of "CSI" know, the "Do not cross" sign is there to make sure the evidence is not corrupted or contaminated by the whole world tramping on it. In the case of a local police supervisor, you know or suspect a crime will happen—and not necessarily by other people's hands. Hence the joke above.

The function of the police in handling jailbreaks, hostage situations, and coup attempts, and in the case of chapter seniors even has not yet. If the police are not there to document that conduct and we have it before the public, we are going to run out of plastic, or whatever material we use to make body bags. And we will have only Gonzalez's word the cops dealt with the crime fully and well.

Even in the case of the "Do not cross" line, I don't know why media should always obey it. I can at least source footnote that sign, with my presumption that the cops are hard at work tending some of whatever like William Devereux, will not have a chilling effect on media (or the public), it will spark gales of laughter in them. We don't have to invoke a hypothetical case, we have a real case right on hand, though one whose tragic dimensions can only spark laughter of the cruelest kind.

That's the Morietta bombing. In theory, of course, the cops who bombed them findings be the ones we're right. Whom would you rather believe, an impartial investigator like the police or a partial one like the group Alyda Gregg hired to sift through the rubble? Elsewhere, in question: you believe the police. Here, in question—you believe the accused. Which belongs to the heart of the problem. The police cannot be trusted. You leave them alone to do their thing behind the "Do not cross" sign, and you have reasonable grounds to assume not that a crime will be solved but that a new one will be committed.

That assumption the media saw infinitely more highly than the police in the public's esteem. They have been found into the role of watchdog in this country. With Gonzalez and his boss attempting to throw a huge "Do not cross" line across the nation today, his question is not whether the media will cross that literal and figurative police line it may be necessary.

Yes, they will. Yes, they should.

* * *

Raul Gonzalez says agreeing with Fredda Lewis, chief public attorney who is spearheading a campaign to free the 12 soldiers convicted of gunning down Eleuterio Aparlan, he is all for it. He says it would be a violation of their human rights to deprive them of customary just because of the personalities involved.

Pastor Princess Bishop Pedro Arigo, head of the Episcopal Commission on Prisoners' Concerns, says the 11 should be given clemency because they have suffered enough. It is very probable, he says, that the 11 are "victims of injustice" since they merely followed orders.

The mastermind of the Aparlan assassination remains unknown to this day.

Compassion is a great and wonderful thing, but justice even more so. The notion that we may not yield to the unyielding demands of the Aparlans, who are really the "personalities" Gonzalez means, forgets that the convicts did not just gun down Wacy; they gunned down Rolando Galman. He may be "collateral damage" in the eyes of the world, but he is not so before the eyes of the lady with the blindfold.

That Galman can actually refer the phrase "human rights" and not tremble to that like Dracula accidentally drinking holy water, can only underline in horrors's mysterious ways. My friend Billy Esposo at least does not require bloodmen as a side effect of a kidney transplant and is still able to see that human rights are being trampled upon in this country, not least by the wanton killings.

Angry concepts of justice to plain astonishing. As far as I know, the Nuremberg trials help up and to not "the concept of "following orders" as a justification for murder, single or en masse. The fact that the convicted of the Aquino-Galman killings remains unidentified is not an argument for freeing the triggermen, or heaven forbid, finding them innocent. It is only an argument for renewing efforts to discover the mastermind. Murder is murder, the most heinous crime in the book, and the murder of an executive or a party, whether it a self-willed or "following orders." As it is, it's a pure exchange, doing life in the penal sense of the term for taking his or all the blood-spattered guts of it.

The hope that the conviction are ill is not an excuse to free them. It is a reason to give them medication. Many Death Row convicts are ill as well, and some of them are far more repulsively innocent, having been given a raw deal in some. Show them that, you free the soldiers who pulled the trigger on Aquino and Galman because there's no sick, you automatically trigger your vicious schemes, one that's already shown signs of turning into a plague.

That is no prescription that can be a country you truly can get away with murder.

Fruits of diplomacy

Political Tidbits

Rolando Olivarez-Constantino

BEIJING—AFTER THE FOCUS IN THE PUBLIC ON China, Philippine officials and private companies have been able to quite a bit (if not entirely owing to diplomacy), due to made possible mostly by the extensive networks of ties or friendship ever since, and the warmth or coldness of relations—with the delegation headed by Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile in Beijing for the 15th ASEAN-China Summit, which was also attended by Philippine Arroyo and other officials, technical and personal chemistry stand the separate interests of diplomats. There were plenty of such contacts during the current visit to China of President Arroyo, Enrile, Speaker Jose de Venecia and the members of Chairman Pia Bangsar of the standing committees of the National People's Congress (NPC), to date it seems there is much less room for maneuver in some—if not all—of the Philippine-China relations than there was before, especially now since—down RP's trade projects, the House in the late 1980s or his five terms as Speaker of the House.

Dr. Severino, accompanied by Representatives Mahan Dilangalen of Quezon City, Gonzalo Duavit, Jr. of Isabela, Saul Gonzales Jr. of Iloilo and Ronaldo Puno of Antipolo, met with Chairman Li, a small group of Chinese-Filipino businessmen was able to see and dialogue with a number of important Chinese leaders in Beijing, led by Prime Ministers Wen Jiabao and Chairman Hu Jintao, the president of China, and Chairman Wu Bangguo, the chairman of the standing committee of the National People's Congress. Chairman Li, a lovely woman in her southwest and Xinwen City in Sichuan province in southwestern China, we were met and taken care of by the local NPC chairperson and other officials, who arranged for meetings between the Chinese-Filipino businessmen and local businessmen and entrepreneurs in search of avenues investment. The Chinese-Filipino delegation also met with Chairman Wu Bangguo, who is retiring, construction, real estate development, fisheries, and even setting up schools to teach English in China. In return they pointed out the immense opportunities for investments in RP such as in building hotels and resorts and in at least a million hectares in the mindanao basin.

Chairman Wu also arranged for meetings between the Chinese-Filipino businessmen and the Chairman of the NPC standing committee and chief of the

Pia Bangsar hosted a proud banquet for the delegation at the Great Hall of the People, after a brief meeting at their hotel during which Enrile learned of unusual interest. The two leaders reminisced about the jumpsuited dinner for Pia at the Mayaflor Restaurant at the Manila Hotel last year hosted by RP during which Chairman was confirmed by Congress, the House of Representatives, at lovely meals in Pia's room dinner into the playing by a small Chinese orchestra of Filipino airs. On the table found, Prime Minister Pia Jiabao into the delegation at the Diaoyutai Hotel despite her tight schedule, to sing the praises of its many friendships leaders in Beijing. Wen Jiabao, who attended the Cebu Asean Summit last year, and JDV had friendly dialogue on issues such as Taiwan's participation in mainstream action on the disputed agreement between China, the Philippines and Vietnam for the joint exploration of the South China Sea for oil, and the establishment of joint fishing operations. JDV also assured China's leaders that RP remains committed to its "One China policy" and "our friendship of a thousand years."

From Beijing the delegation was flown south

Time to set them free

Human Face

Ma. Ceres P. Doyo

BOAC, GOD, WHERE BEFORE THE 20TH ANNIversary of the assassination of Ninoy Aquino, I spent days in the Sen. Bobbit Palace interviewing the three who were released in the last few days of the three-month interim time. One hugged them for at least 20 times, one or several of the reporters would finally come up to reveal who had orders to release the three and I noticed how the three responded to the questions. What I got was the same: recollections of their horrible day in August, what they were doing when the shooting was and what they did after the shots rang out. And I noticed how they responded to the questions about their personalities and their families.

Except for Sgt. Bobby Hartigan who was overtaken, had been trying to say something about his son, Jonathan, who was happily and proudly ignored, the three had nothing to say. Each one of them was asked only whether he was, what he did and his family.

Now, the pictures here are about to spring open so that these interviews could walk free. There is one found answer against the three remaining soldiers. There are only regrets that no one else, other than Montano, has given funds so to be questioned.

Sgt. Hartigan's first concern about the plane is the nature. Since Americans mentioned there is an American involved here, and those who supported Colman with bullets since they were just doing their job. "Colman did it," and not one of them, to the court had called.

Sgt. Hartigan the memory the 16 convicts in the Aquino-Galman murder case are:

Aviation Security Command (Avscom) chief Brig. Gen. Ludovico Custodio who died of cancer in prison; Capt. Romeo Saturnino, warrant officer Arturo Lumbao and Sgt. Pablo Martinez, quartermaster sergeant.

Lt. Jose Castro, leader of the bonding party transported Sgt. Claro Lat, Pfc. Rolando Abadilla, Pfc. Jesus Castillo, Pfc. Alfredo Lanuza, Cpl. Bienvenido Tiu, Sgt. Rolando de Guzman, Cpl. Clarence Hilario, Sgt. Rolando Galman.

Sgt. Rosario Bocobong, leader of the 10002 Fresh Alpha that included Sgt. Rolando Mateo, Sgt. Rolando de Guzman, Cpl. Cordova Basilio, Cpl. Rufino Aquino, Spc. Israelito Guarin and Sgt. Rolando Tavias.

Except for Custodio, Saturnino and Montano, the rest were members of "the bonding party that left Aquino down the plane (one of whom, and not Rolando Galman, was supposed to have shot Aquino as he descended), and "members of Team Alpha that was on the waiting C-130" one crew the airplane. Members of Team Alpha were Capt. Owen Galman, leader; the Fifth Aquino was he was and brought him to Fort Bonifacio."

Also, except for Custodio and Saturnino, all came from the lowest ranks of the armed forces of the Philippines. The 20 other accused—high ranking officials in the Marcos government and the military and some private individuals and John Doe—walked free.

On Sept. 25, 1990, the Sandiganbayan handed down its decision finding the 16 men guilty and sentenced them on two counts to life imprisonment or to reclusion perpetua. At that time, the sentence was the maximum punishment under the 1987 Constitution and it was intended to bring back the death penalty.

The Sandiganbayan so ruled that the convicted were "eligible to be examined to the maximum penalty of death."

Twenty years after a crime was committed, new evidence cannot be used to change anyone who may have been party to the crime—as long as the person was in the country the last five 20 years. If the person is said to have gone into outside the country, the time spent abroad would not be included in the 20 years. The burden is on the accused to prove that he was not in that he was barely left only to flee.

Also, since the crime has been hanged within the 20-year period, the convicted pulled no longer

apples, sinners are exploited. The presumption point all applies to suspects who, for lack of persuasion, were not hiding but stayed in the country for 20 years after they were charged. Applying the law, they could be acquitted pointed to as the Aquino-Galman case have done.

The guilty who are walking free should see was made. Many witnesses, and perhaps the entire crime, alone and fearing never all three 20 years, people just come out of the woodwork and make themselves guilt of terror.

The double-jeopardy issue had been investigated by the Presidential Commission, then the Agrava Commission. The second had been used in the Sandiganbayan under Justice Manuel Herrera and acquitted in 1985, during the time of Sandiganbayan Chairman.

After Marcos was deposed, and Bianco's widow, Corazon Aquino, became president, citizens petitioned the Supreme Court to reopen the case. The case was again tested as a Special Division of the Supreme Court, in which Justice Cruz was a member.

As of today, the convicts have served 20 more counting from 1990) plus the years they were in detention while they were being tried the first time and the years they were on appeal. Some of the convicts in the case are mostly unbothered, considering they could only have acted on directions and placed their pens at misdemeanors plus they have to do so working alone.

We want to see them free.

Send feedback to mceres@inq.com.ph

Totally lost

RECENTLY I WATCHED "SURFACE 2," A MICROSOFT DEMO out in New York. The evening would not have been any better for me. There were cute songs in the musical that made me almost fall off my chair from laughing because I was embarrassed, especially at the music in my life. The song-and-a "What do you do on the BlackBerry® and "Touch it to me."

The songs had lines such as, "What do you do in the BlackBerry®? What will any life be?" Pertinent of college and years of knowledge have roamed our days, useless degree." Another hasty line from "It wants to be [illegible] and turning 35." And another: "Do black-getting and getting down cause I like romantic things like music and not dark so you know! I have a gigantic heart so why don't I have a heart to me?"

I remember clearly that I was jumping up and down for joy on top of my self-inflicted comic relief, a rare act for someone who competes during our high school graduation that I was so happy that finally I could leave the four walls of my high school. Then, fast-forward to my college graduation days. Again I experience the same joy get over my college. I was held accountable of subjects in one term, to be able to graduate as early as possible.

In my last year in high school, I knew very well what course I wanted to take in college, and in my last year in college I also knew very well what I wanted to do after college. I wasn't afraid of [illegible] I had a great plan. I was on a roll. I worked through eight after college for an AIESEC International Traineeship Exchange Program in Bulgaria, Romania, and when I returned to Manila, I worked for advertising, something I really wanted to do.

Now, I'm totally lost. It's as if what I took had stumbled upon me and I don't know what to do with it. My plans—my dreams don't work out now. It makes me wonder if I have to study a quarter-life crisis, which I never believed before. I feel like I'm in one. It seems as if my path is good enough for me or the job I am looking for is coveted by practically everyone else. I almost regret not taking up information technology or finance-related courses in college, because I could have had more employers. But then I don't think I would have survived those courses for even a week.

What do I do now that I'm at a crossroads? I think I have a couple of options.

One of my friends on Facebook posted this group, tagged, "I am studying my MBA because I don't want to work." It seems like going back to school is the next best option instead of hunting around. Any people (especially your fundamentalists) seem to be impressed when you say you'll be back in school, taking MBA.

When you can't find your dream job, a family business, course is also a remedy. I know a couple of friends involved in family businesses and they despise working there. But if you're jobless and your family has a family business, you're not broke. You'll never be a bum. You can be chasing some trends or you help anyone you want. Whatever kind of work, just as you create some time to start to shine.

I could also apply for a job that is the perfect job is your typical Olden people tell me they got their jobs by accident or by luck. Now, they have worked in their fields for years and have become the expert in their fields. But how long is long enough to wait for a number of luck to come my way?

I could also join the never-growing Peace Corps Movement. I have some people who finish jobs abroad in a year, especially in Singapore where they need people badly because of study population.

Or I could just pray to God to direct me the way and the perfect plan. But while saying it is my perfect plan, I am back to [illegible] Math and English, answering Questions, Algebra, Trigonometry, Pre-Calculus and subjects even I appreciate for the GMAT.

Amy Cruz, 25, has a degree in marketing management and psychology from De La Salle University and is preparing to start graduate studies.

What to do with a College Education

Katrina Rivera

I FINISHED COLLEGE RECENTLY AND I HAVE REALIZED that a tricky part is deciding what to do next. I am faced with a lot of options.

I feel for anyone in college in this generation where economic has their choose of any profession—engineering to accountancy before, law, medicine and [illegible] is still always be, back to economic side only. Not even Philippine has the entire chance to get a good education and then to choose what they want to do with their lives. Then whole lives is spent trying to make money just to get by day after day.

There are many others are younger than I am but who have already finished college. How can they go to school? In our country 70 percent of Filipinos aged 16-24 are out of school. Most of them didn't choose to be so.

Being among the privileged few, I feel I have the responsibility to do more with my college degree than just earn enough income for myself and for my family. There is nothing wrong with planning to have a family and living a decent life. But we must include the rest of the Filipino people in our dreams.

We have elected the third consecutive I have heard of others led by foreign organizations to reach communities, unattainable livelihood. It is said that we can't help our fellow Filipinos unless we help ourselves.

No matter what one's education or skills, there's a lot we can do to help. But first, we must care. We are needed here. I know there are compelling reasons that drive millions of Filipinos to leave. But is leaving the solution? Leaving and being that problem at a station even like a better one. I wish our teachers, doctors and engineers stay in the Philippines and contribute their brilliant ideas to the development of our own. My DOST scholarship and my sponsored education oblige me to work here after graduation. It is more than that however that binds me to our land.

Every thought our generation possesses has to see change in our country. What we can do is set the foundation for change so I ask our Filipinos to the previous generations have been doing.

Katrina Rivera, 22, graduated with cum laude from the University of the Philippines earlier degree in Chemical Engineering.

Mixed and muddled dates

The Long View

Manuel L. Quezon III

NEXT WEDNESDAY, THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE foundation of our First Republic will take place, and be ignored, but, I'd reached the setting aside of the birthday of Philippine Independence, and of the convening of the Malolos Congress, and be in agreement that both Aguinaldo or an elected president—Manuel Quezon III—should celebrate on July 4, 1946. Since we don't observe this day, 22 (the day in 1896 when the revolutionary agents Santos began, and the day in 1898 when the Act of Declaration of Independence as our flag, including the Biak-na-Bato Republic, was issued, down on June 12, 1898 as our Independence Day and not our First Republic (which, as I said, was in existence for four years as terms of the foundation of our nation).

There are some problems raised by the focus on June 12, to the exclusion of when some believe and used place other dates. The 1899 of the Malolos Congress, Sen. Edgardo Angara, Jr. has argued, which makes no sense. If we view Republic dates as Filipinos, then we have to view the republic had to view the Commonwealth, and then the Republic as the Fourth Republic, and so on. That view would be absurd, as would the Chinese-Filipino businessmen and local businessmen and entrepreneurs in search of avenues investment. The Chinese-Filipino delegation also met with Chairman Wu Bangguo, who is retiring, construction, real estate development, fisheries, and even setting up schools to teach English in China. In return they pointed out the immense opportunities for investments in RP such as in building hotels and resorts and in at least a million hectares in the mindanao basin.

Chairman Wu also arranged for meetings between the Chinese-Filipino businessmen and the Chairman of the NPC standing committee and chief of the

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To UP, all the best in the next 100 years

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES started its year-long Centennial celebration last Feb. 8. I wish the entire UP community all the best in the next 100 years and I also wish that the university will soon recover from its decline as a distinguished and internationally competitive learning institution (except for its commitment excellence in the Arts).

The new 1st Charter has yet to be signed into law; the jocks in Philippine Congress (Senate and the House) have yet on it for more than 20 years. It's a microcosm of the entire Philippines...its resources many unknown than of our society, its development is held hostage by dirty politics, apathy and lack of philanthropy among those who have and are capable of helping due to economics.

—EDGAR BORAGAY,
gborago@gmail.com

Colorum task force illegally arrested lawyer

ATTY. ENRICO ERICSON ANCELO Reyes, head of the Task Force against "Colorum" operations, called a press conference last Jan. 14, he did not allow lawyers Ortiz-Avila to set up his mic even though some media people wanted to ask the latter some questions. (SOURCE, 1/15/07)

And Avila never gives the opportunity to the media to ask questions. Why? Maybe he/she knows that Secretary Reyes' group was the one who had committed illegal acts against Avila.

1. Which he was arrested...Avila was merely exercising his role as a lawyer to protect those whose rights have been violated.

2. Avila had introduced himself as lawyer for those who were being accosted by a policeman, Reyes identified as Alexander M. De Guzman III. He told the latter that he (what Reyes said to Avila's group) was doing was illegal, only the task Transportation Office has the authority to arrest erring vehicle operators; (b) if they would not stop, he would be forced to use them.

3. De Guzman merely ignored him, so he ordered his officers not to honor what De Guzman and company was doing because it was illegal, to which, De Guzman warned with arrogance.

4. De Guzman ordered his colleagues to arrest Avila, who immediately questioned his arrest since he was only exercising his role as counsel-in-law.

5. But De Guzman and company ignored his pronouncements and even physically manhandled him and told him that he was being arrested, for what reason, he was never told.

6. On the other hand, it is clear that De Guzman and company—and not only he—are guilty of: (a) illegal arrest—they assaulted and prevented Avila from exercising his duty as counsel; (b) plain common sense—they prevented Atty. Avila to exercise his role as lawyer for the harassed drivers; and (c) illegal arrest—he was handcuffed after he was violated the rule of law.

7. Had he not been illegally detained, Avila would have already filed the documents mentioned above against Reyes, Roy Kyamko and company.

8. Avila would have also submitted to Director Reyes, Kyamko and company that this country is still "a country of laws, not of men."

Nevertheless, as soon as Avila shall have been able to recover from his illness, he will welcome delay the the aggression cases against Secretary Reyes, Kyamko, De Guzman and company.

—L.L.A. ENRIQUEZ, Esq.
Counsel for Cecilio Avila

'Perception' connotes subjectivity

MENTAL A READER GOT CONFUSED with the use or misuse of the word "perception" in yesterday's (Jan. 15) issue of the Inquirer's opinion survey findings. (SOURCE, 1/14/2007)

Webster defines perception as emotional issues in attentional, insight, emotions or motivational states. It is a subjective reality, more or less unique to the individual, or in a larger sense, perception is a personal belief not universally validated such. Take the issue of a color blind person. He perceives all colors as one. He is deceived by his own eyes. True, perception could lead to deception.

The inherent weakness of the so-called perception survey lies in the matrix of perception itself. Perception is an abstraction that is not ostensible to those and all the measurements. Hence, the sampling scales cannot remove the subjectivity in making perception. Respondents differ in their own perceived standards in evaluating abstract variables.

The foregoing survey anxiety is underscored by the true intention of the survey taxpayer, instead of asking the respondents "Who is the most corrupt President?" the question is changed to "Who is the President who is the most corrupt and good for the country?" Then, perhaps, we can discern a different picture. The individuals may even be reversed.

It would be highly professional and ethical for a survey institution like Pulse Asia to ask questions "with neither any words none"...if we may borrow the words of Abraham Lincoln.

—PABLO L. MIRALPEIX,
consultant,
Graduate School of Management,
Mapúa Institute of Technology,
Manila City "2006

REPRESENTATIVES of Sumilao farmers in a meeting with President Macapagal-Arroyo

Bernas out of touch with the case of Sumilao farmers

FR. JOAQUIN BERNAS S.J., MY COLleague in the College of Law at the Ateneo de Manila [Padre Faura], looks at the Sumilao problem purely from the legalistic point of view. He argues that because the Government failed to implement the conversion into plots for the 144 hectares of land as approved and as scheduled, he has forfeited his rights to the land in favor of the former beneficiaries. He did not consider the economic benefits that the proposal of the San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI) to the farmers through—offer to the whole province of Bukidnon and the human dimension.

After finishing our degree in law, we were both to our home provinces to practice our profession, while Father Bernas remained in the academe and the Jesuit order where he belongs, he is definitely out of touch, and does not have adequate knowledge of the lifestyle and behavior of the so-called "normal" or not-so-rules manownership of the "unnormal manner."

I am ready to furnish Father Bernas a copy of a visit of the 18 Senate of Mexico accompanied by three "himself" over several provinces of land awarded to those under the Land Reform Agrarian Reform Program in order to see if different buyers, mainly at bargain prices. Instead, how could the unschooled, "un-looked" and capital-less "natural" developed the land given them into a profitable and productive farm?

If Father Bernas' view prevails, those people will remain in the quagmire of poverty, living a lifestyle reminiscent of the Stone Age, eating mainly on root crops, fruits, vegetables, and, for the luxury of them, a small patch of corn and rice plantation. We these people are entitled to live their own lifestyle. But isn't it improper for the government to provide them with opportunities, but less brighter than what SMFI is offering them?

If the 144 hectares property is subdivided among the 31 beneficiaries, I am sure that like the 30 that I mentioned above, they will just sell their shares to a willing buyer.

I am endorsing the help of my students computers in convincing President Macapagal-Arroyo to allow the SMFI to push through with its projects (which are almost operational) and give each of the 31 farmers the cash value of their shares [amount short of the property I envision the farmers will accept the scheme. After all, they will really their sins when they undertook the 1,700 kilometer hike from Sumilao to Manila.

—EDILBERTO C. ADALEM,
retired regional state prosecutor,
Region 10, Cagayan de Oro City

The ugly side of agrarian reform

THE DISPUTE BETWEEN SAN MIGUEL Foods Inc. (SMFI) and the Sumilao farmers should give us pause and make us reflect on the ugly side of agrarian reform.

To recall, the shutdown of 200 farmers, 2,000 job opportunities for workers in Bukidnon will be lost, and no revenues that the SMFI is expected to generate from its Sumilao operations will not be realized. But wait, there is more to learn from the dispute that will affect society at least its investments in Sumilao? It may have to raise the prices on the products it sells. And we still think "agrarian reform" is a good thing?

The SMFI issue would come out of the frustration some if SMFI employed the farmers at least for their dropping their opposition to SMFI's plans. As for the rest of us, we should always look at all sides of every issue—the good, the bad and the ugly.

—ROMEO I. REED, dg1966@yahoo.com

Charter is very clear: Erap disqualified to run

ALL THE TALK ABOUT FORMER PRESident Joseph Ejercito Estrada running for president in 2010 is nothing but a lot of nonsense, started by people who are either dense (ignorant or hope to take advantage of the ignorance of others.

Erap definitely cannot run for presidential again.

Sec. 4, Article VII of the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines states in part:

"The President shall not be eligible for any reelection." Time difficult is this provision is understood!

Even alone President Macapagal-Arroyo, claims she can run for reelection! So, she is not. She is merely succeeded Erap as president in 2001...the 2004 presidential election was the first and only time she was elected President.

It's time we learned (or, at least to know the Constitution from a part of our country's checkered history.

—ANTONIO C. PAPELERO,
Philippine Bank Exchange Center,
Ortigas Center, Pasig City

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My OFW daughters and the rising peso

COMMENTARY

Felicito C. Payumo

MY THREE OFW DAUGHTERS CAME home, briefly, for the wedding of their brother. Only breakfast, I asked Ate, who works in New York City doing investment finance for a financial guarantee company, if she thought that the billions of dollars in OFW remittances keep the value of the dollar low. Her take she didn't think so—not as money of police "Because of the recession or to unemployment, the Fed is losing power to control the interest rates to push up the capital market. But as the interest rate is declined, funds tend to leave the United States to seek higher interest rates elsewhere. As a consequence, the dollar weakens, but the economy of United States has designed to keep it low."

That lent the economics caused by the outage of manufactured goods from third world countries like? Considered, "China now manages the US market with its cheap labor, inexpensive electronics and hi-tech gadgets. This takes many jobs from Americans, as the United States now source the dollar kept weaker to offset cheaper labor. Unfortunately, natural goods from other countries will be more expensive, that is, less competitive. So, it is to be design," I pontificated to end the argument.

"But if that is so, how come the Euro remains very strong even though Chinese products are all over the stores in Europe," my other daughter, Ria, joined in. She works with a asset company in London, so she should know. I could only reply, "Maybe the Euro is getting strong because the dollar is getting weak."

All the while, my third daughter, Aileen, was browsing two remained stories in time for Christmas. She had dabbled in the classic author but now works for a big-box magazine in Manhattan. All three were strange to say the least. What I know is my dollar now get me less of pesos so I buy gifts for my relatives here. I, Aileen, ended the argument ...and the mental hunger.

I asked myself: "If my daughters who but no dependents immediate down, which account for half of our population, are being hit by a dollar situation of decreasing income and rising prices.

Six months everyone claims its the end of the world. Time to ride every man jungle—brute strength is final exchange case for OFW remittances. (In effect a subsidy, but who would beat the cost?), or a forward over [which very few OFWs read on], to preparing with a new job, accepting salaries of less than minimum wage, doing dollar loans and switching to borrowing to pesos, or suppor

Across the NATION

A HUNGER collects one in a crowd on Mt. Diwata (Diwata II), one of the gold-rich sites in the country that has suffered from the $5 billion in mining

Police file murder raps vs 8 men linked to bus bombings, extortion

COTABATO CITY—POLICE filed murder charges against eight men believed to be involved in a series of bomb attacks on buses in Central Mindanao that killed two people and said to be the work of extortionists with links to a terror network.

Al Cairo, North Cotabato provincial prosecutor, said those charged with murder and frustrated murder in a court in Kidapawan City were Radzuden Gabales, who was arrested in Tacurong City; Jubaen Sadiaat (not real name), Sukkhadin Saiasan, Abdul Sahan Bebas, Hakeh Abdul, Mohammad Nur, Salahudin Hasanin, Jamerzar Hashim and Mohaliden Jodit Kusora, who remain at large.

Cairo said the charges were filed on Jan. 14.

He said Gabales had admitted that he and Sukkhadin were members of the al-Khobar group, led by a certain Hakeh Abdul.

Cairo said the suspect also confessed to involvement in the Matalam bombings last year, the Aug. 5 attacks on Yellow Bus Line in Kumalarak City that killed a Protestant preacher and wounded 12 others; the July 26 bombing that wounded three people inside a Yellow Bus Line unit at its Tacurong terminal; and the October bombing in Banisilan, Davao del Sur, that killed five people and wounded 16 others.

In Lanao del Norte, authorities say promising members of extortion groups that target transmission towers of National Transmission Corp. (Transco).

The latest attack on a Transco tower occurred on Sunday evening when armed men blasted Tower No. 30 in Poblac, Kauswagan town. —Jaime Molinyawe and Rahul Emal, Inquirer Mindanao

Villagers expel Aussie firm team from mining community

By Melvin Gascon
Inquirer Northern Luzon

SOLANO, NUEVA VIZCAYA—AT LEAST 100 RESIDENTS OF upland villages in Kasibu town on Friday drove out employees of a foreign mining firm and their earth-moving equipment that were supposed to start exploration in their community, reports reaching the Inquirer said on Wednesday.

Workers of OceanaGold (Philippines Inc., an Australian company, were forced to leave Barangay Pupuan as demanded by tribal villagers, who reiterated their stand against mining.

"The people did not stop until they (mining workers) and their equipment were already outside the village's boundaries. We took note of (the chief's) who we escorted home and," Petronila Dadino, a resident, said in the dialect.

Friday's encounter threatened to unsettle Gold's latest attempt to conduct exploration work in Pupuan. It tried to bring drilling equipment to the site.

The residents, who belong to the Ifugao, Bunol and Kalanguya, have been protesting the entry of OceanaGold, maintaining that the permit granted to the company was unlawful and illegal.

The protest, they said, also violated a local ordinance that declared their village land as watershed for cities, plantations and in nearby villages.

Pupuan leads watershed forests that feed the Ahinuda, Making and Ibbilawa rivers. These are main sources of irrigation for about 150,000 hectares in Bambang Valley, which has six villages.

Republic Act No. 7942, or the Mining Act of 1995, prohibits mining in a tribal community without the consent of residents. Mining is also banned in watersheds.

OceanaGold officials insist they no longer need proof of consent from the community since they have a Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement (FTAA) granted by the government in 2004 to Climax-Mining Ltd., its predecessor.

While the Constitution prohibits foreign firms from exploiting the country's natural resources, the law allows the use of the FTAA by foreign mining projects.

Company executives also claim that the FTAA should prevail because it came before the Papuyo withdrawal.

OceanaGold's FTAA covers 21,605 hectares of Kasibu, including Didipio village, which hosts the company's flagship gold-copper project, and 12 other sites.

It faces what could turn into a long-and-legal battle with anti-mining villagers in Didipio who have vowed to stay on their land.

OceanaGold was supposed to expand its exploration in Pupuan, but its crews met with opposition from villagers.

On Wednesday, the residents were alarmed over reports that OceanaGold workers were coming, according to radio. The next day, about 100 villagers set up a barricade on the road leading to the drilling site, blocking a backhoe and company personnel.

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Center for Continuing Education

Supreme Court of the Philippines
Judicial and Bar Council
Manila

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) announces the opening for application or recommendation, of judicial positions in the following Regional Trial Courts:

Manila: Brs. 174 to 181
Makati City: Brs. 133 to 262
Quezon City: Brs. 228 to 230
Pasig: Brs. 259 to 270
Caloocan City: Br. 232
Iriga City, Camarines Sur: Br. 35

Applications or recommendations must be submitted on or before 15 FEBRUARY 2008 (Friday) to the JBC Secretariat, 2nd Flr. Centennial Bldg., Supreme Court, Padre Faura St., Manila (Tel. No. 552-9512; Fax No. 552-9598; e-mail address: jbc_supremecourt@yahoo.com.ph), together with six (6) copies of the following:

Application letter or Recommendation letter with the conforme of the recommendee in the letter itself or in a separate document
Personal Data Sheet (JBC Form 1 downloadable from the JBC Website http://jbc.supremecourt.gov.ph)
Proof of Filipino Citizenship
ID Picture (2x2)
ITR for the past two (2) years
Clearances from NBI, Ombudsman, BIR, Office of the Bar Confidant and employer
Transcript of School Records
Police Clearance from place of residence
Certificate of Admission to the Bar (with Bar Ruling)
Certificate of Good Standing or latest Official Receipt from the IBP National Treasurer

16 January 2008

MA. LUISA D. VILLARAMA
Clerk of Court & JBC
Ex Officio Secretary

Boracay land dispute turns bloody; 1 dead

By Nestor F Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

KALIBO, Philippines—DISPUTED OWNERSHIP of land on the world-famous Boracay Island turned violent on Monday when a former soldier and his son were killed and a 13-year-old boy was wounded in a confrontation over a piece of property.

Retired Army Sgt. Victoriano Manzing died of multiple bullet wounds after he shot it out with security guards of a lot in Sitio Cogbus in Barangay Manoc-Manoc around 4:30 p.m., said Senior Insp. Aurelio Dedoc, chief of the Boracay Special Tourist Protection Office (BSTPO), in a phone interview.

A corporation allegedly controlled by the family of Aklan Gov. Carlito Marquez owned the property.

Dedoc said Aklan Odessin, 15, was wounded in the crossfire and brought to the Dr. Rafael S. Tumbokon Memorial hospital in the capital town of Kalibo for initial treatment.

Manzing, armed with a handgun, entered the compound at around 4 a.m. on Monday with 20 of his relatives and insisted that he owned the property that was also being claimed by the Marquez family, a real estate company reportedly controlled by the five children of the governor.

The security guard assigned at the compound sought reinforcement from the agency, which sent many guards.

The guards later shot it out with Manzing as his companions fled.

Manzing died on the spot. Police recovered a .45-cal. pistol and six spent bullets from the scene.

Dedoc said 21 security guards involved in the clash had been detained. Three weapons, including five shotguns and two .38-cal. pistols, were confiscated.

Marquez said he did not know Manzing, but said that Pulyahenis Gubinelas owns three lots each with an area of about 5,000 square meters.

"I have heard that he is claiming ownership over the property as one of the heirs of the former owner, but those [properties had] already been transferred to my children's companies," Marquez told the Inquirer in a telephone interview.

He said he had ordered the provincial police to investigate.

The P30-billion tourism industry of the 1,000-hectare Boracay Island has driven real estate prices zooming in recent years. Prime lots along the beach range from P30,000 to P50,000 per sq m.

Land rents inland are also fast rising because of congestion on the beach.

Private ownership of lots on the island is technically illegal under Proclamation No. 1801 issued by the late President Ferdinand Marcos on Nov. 10, 1978.

The proclamation declared Boracay and other islands and areas as tourist zones reserved and respected these as public lands.

But a significant portion of the island is titled. Most of the locators owners and residents have been occupying other lots for around 30 years through tax declarations or titles/deeds.

As more tourists come in, tension over land ownership has risen between families who have been staying there for decades and big corporations and people from the mainland.

TERRACE KEEPERS
Farmers continue to plant various rice varieties at the Banaue rice terraces in Mountain Province to keep the terraces, threatened with [illegible], alive.

Angeles City casino faces deluge of protests

ANGELES CITY—OFFICIALS and students of the Angeles University Foundation on Wednesday began holding pickets in front of a casino that is scheduled to open tomorrow at the city's University belt.

"We cannot tolerate this, hurting a casino near academic institutions," Dr. Emmanuel Angeles, AUF chancellor, said in an interview.

Oluwafemi Mimiagarijo Jr., the youngest brother of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, sits in the university's board of directors.

The AUF is also set to file a petition for a temporary restraining order against Ernpia Entertainment.

A site check by the Inquirer showed that it had rented the entire 200 square-meter second floor of Elysian Building in Barangay Balibago here.

Floors that Empia has been distributing in the commercial district of nearby Balibago carried the logo of the state-owned Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. and announced that the casino had slot machines, and games of baccarat, black jack and roulette.

Angeles said the casino was 153 meters from the AUF, 93 meters from the Philippine Women's University extension campus, 186 meters from the Montessori School, and 53 meters from two churches of Iglesia ni Cristo and the Archdiocese of San Fernando.

Empia's owner, Emmanuel Jacinto, said Pagcor's senior vice president Rose Figueroa had issued him a certificate to operate a few weeks ago.

"We have submitted all the requirements. We have passed the location criteria," Jacinto said in a phone interview.

According to him, the casino was 206 meters from the AUF. Jacinto claimed that the city engineer's office certified that distance to be correct.

Mayor Vivian Pineda-Nepomuceno said he had to confirm that claim but added that he was certain that his office has not yet issued a business permit to Empia.

Jacinto said he chose that one after Pagcor had disapproved his plan to locate in Holidaze where Pagcor has its own casino.

Bodie King, Pagcor public relations manager, denied Jacinto's claim that his firm had been issued a permit to operate.

"It has no certificate to operate because it has not submitted a business permit yet. We're also still validating if it has complied with the distance requirement," King said.

The building owner, Rosa Narciso, said Empia started negotiating for a lease in October last year. She said she took it in as a tenant when it showed earlier this month the certificate to operate. Pinsel Ovejas, Inquirer Central Luzon

DBP
Development Bank of the Philippines

INVITATION TO BID

ITEM NO.	DESCRIPTION	QTY. (Sets)	LOCATION	APPROVED BID
REAL ESTATE MORTGAGE				
08-RM-01	Residential/CI No. 1-10000	01	Bo. 23 Pangpang Cotabato City, Maguindanao, Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao	P 1,172,000.00
FORECLOSURE				
07-RM-01	Residential/CI No. 10000	01	Bo. 000 Sample, Brgy Pagkilatan, Muntinlupa City	000,000.00
08-RM-02	Residential/CI No. 10000	01	Lot 000, Blk 00, Sample Subd., Brgy. Tunasan, Muntinlupa City	P 000,000.00
08-RM-03	Residential/CI No. 10000	01	Bo. 000 Lot Compound, Brgy. Tunasan, Muntinlupa City	P 00,000.00
08-RM-04	Residential/CI No. 10000	01	Lot 000, Blk 00, Sample Subd., Brgy Tunasan, Muntinlupa City	P 000,000.00
08-RM-05	Residential/CI No. 10000	01	Lot 000, Blk 00, Sample Subd., Brgy Tunasan, Muntinlupa City	P 000,000.00
08-RM-06	Residential/CI No. 10000	01	Lot 000, Blk 00, Sample Subd., Brgy Tunasan, Muntinlupa City	P 000,000.00
08-RM-07	Residential/CI No. 10000	01	Lot 000, Blk 00, Sample Subd., Brgy Tunasan, Muntinlupa City	P 000,000.00
CHATTELS				
08-RM-08	Residential/CI No. 10000	01	Lot 000, Blk 00, Sample Subd., Brgy Tunasan, Muntinlupa City	P 000,000.00
08-RM-09	Residential/CI No. 10000	01	Lot 000, Blk 00, Sample Subd., Brgy Tunasan, Muntinlupa City	P 000,000.00

Development Bank of the Philippines reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any defect therein and accept the bid most advantageous to the Bank. Interested bidders may inspect the properties during office hours.

JOSE FRANCISCO DE LEON
Head, Asset Disposition Department

Pub. Jan. 14 & 15, 2008

Newsbriefs

2 life terms for rapist

TAGUIG CITY—A regional trial court has sentenced a tricycle driver to two life terms after he was found guilty of raping two female minor passengers almost four years ago.

Judge Jocelyn Arambulo, of the 115th RTC Branch 2, found Elmo Mamigo guilty of two counts of rape for molesting the girls, aged 11 and 13 years.

Arambulo also ordered him to pay P100,000 to each of the victims as civil indemnity.

Mamigo is detained at the provincial jail in Barangay Mankilam. Vincent Lim, Inquirer Mindanao

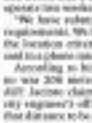
P10,000 reward for cow killers

DUMAGUETE CITY—The provincial government of Negros Oriental offered a P10,000 cash reward for the arrest of "serial" killers of cows in the town.

Mayor Rodolfo Gonzales said that since a month ago, unidentified men had slaughtered three cows on separate occasions while the animals were grazing.

"The modus operandi is the same. That's why I called it serial killing. The cows were slaughtered in the grazing land and the perpetrator took the meat and left the bones," he said.

He said the case "must be solved immediately." Otherwise, he said, the perpetrators would be encouraged to kill more cows.



Rizzy Acevedo, Inquirer Visayas

2 slain in GenSan attack

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Two persons were killed inside a five-year-old girl in an critical condition when two unidentified men attacked a videoke bar in Purok Malinawon, Calumpang village here on Jan. 14.

SPO4 Rodolfo Lumaderas of the Tambler police precinct, said Ronald de Dacoscos and Allan Corpuz died on the spot when two men sprayed them with bullets.

A stray bullet also lodged in the back of the head of a five year-old, identified as Shirley Ann.

Lumaderas said Dacoscos, who suffered five bullet wounds in different parts of the body, was buying cigarettes when the attackers shot him.

Another customer, identified as Marvin Rondina, escaped. Agustine Z. Zenon, Inquirer Mindanao

2 rebels killed in clash near Metro

LUCENA CITY—At least two suspected New People's Army rebels were killed and another was narrowly wounded after communist rebels and government troops clashed in Mt. Laguna, on Jan. 12, a military report said.

Soldiers from the 1st Infantry Battalion, under Lt. Col. Francisco Cedric, chased down the armed men in the barrio Maslac at about 8 a.m., said Capt. Peter Cayetanojr., the Army's 2d Infantry Brigade (Lakandiwa) operations officer.

The two rebels, whose bodies had to be identified, were killed in the gunfire. Their wounded comrade was brought to the nearest hospital by soldiers and policemen, the report said. Bette T. Mabait Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

Evening of music

THE SIBANDA Alumnae is holding an evening of music, meditation and chanting of incantations at 6:30 p.m. today at 7484 Bagtikan St. San Antonio Village, Makati City.

The public program, with the theme "Where we change the world changes," is being held to remember its founder, the late Ms. Lourdes Sibanda (1930-1986).

Ermita asks vice gov to shut up on electoral case

LIPA CITY—THE SON OF EXECUTIVE SECretary Eduardo Ermita advised Batangas Vice Gov. Mark Leviste on Friday to just let the Commission on Elections decide on the electoral protest that he had filed against him.

Edwin Ermita also asked Leviste to focus on the issue and stop dragging his father's name into the case.

"From the beginning [of the electorate], all that he is saying is that I'm a son of the executive secretary. I cannot inhibit myself from being the son of my dad. The issue at hand is the fraud they committed," Edwin told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

Ghosts

"They made their own ghosts and now they are afraid of their ghosts," he added.

The young Ermita said Leviste was "condemning the minds of the people" through media to make it appear that his congressional loss in the elections.

"That's for the lawyers and the Comelec to decide on our issue to place it [the electoral protest] in the proper forum," said Edwin, who ran with Gov. Vilma Santos-Recto in the May 2007 elections.

Comelec results showed that Leviste won over Ermita by close to 19,000 votes.

In July, Edwin filed a protest case against Leviste, accusing him of cheating, acts of terrorism and intimidation, and protested the results in 34 towns. The charges were denied by Leviste.

Comelec appeal

Last week, lawyers of Leviste asked the Comelec First Division to suspend the ballot revision on the electoral protest.

Through counsels Pete Quiazon and Inno Bellanca Jr., Leviste expressed fears that some ballots had been replaced with "fake and spurious" ones to support his rival's allegations of cheating.

The vice governor expressed disgust over the "scarcely hasty, late and piecemeal" utterances the Comelec division, headed by acting chair Resurreccion Borra, was handling the case.

Quiazon said in Leviste's motion that "the revelations found in the canvass process remain grossly unfair to those body can reward users of Tanauan City and Lipa City in 2004 when the decisions handed down by the Comelec were more consistent." Marlon Alexander Lucero, Inquirer Southern Luzon

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

ALBAY BULK WATER PROJECT

Clean water for Albay, but poor griping

By Ephraim Aguilar
Legazpi City

A MULTIMILLION-PESO FACILITY to deliver clean water from a river to more than 17,000 households in Legazpi City may be a superb idea, but not to the poor who cannot afford to pay for it.

Philippine Hydro (Phil Hydro) Inc., which will undertake the P500-million bulk water project for the government-owned Legazpi City Water District (LCWD), will charge consumers P12.50 per cubic meter, or an increase of almost half of the current rate.

This would mean a jump of P198 this year up to 2009 in the existing monthly minimum rate of P135 for a consumption of not more than 10 cubic meters. More increases are scheduled until 2015, when the rate will be pegged at P288.

According to LCWD officials, the rate increases are necessary if the consumers want a quality and stable supply of water.

Water from river

Under the new system called "High-rate Permanent Media Filtration Technology," water from the Yawa River in Tabaco, an 11-kilometer channel where volcanic gullies converge and extend up to the Albay Gulf, instead of from springs around Mayon Volcano.

"Water coming from the Yawa River will pass through embedded perforated pipes that shall serve as a natural filtration system. Chemicals and chlorine are added to supplement that will ensure the required water quality is not before distribution to the public," says Beatriz Michelle Bercilon, LCWD public relations assistant.

She says the spring water is now declared because of its high iron content. But the oil studies conducted by the LCWD and the Land Water Utilities Administration (LWUA) it is reddish and smells like fish—characteristics of water from artesian wells that is not potable—says chemical engineer Ariel Ibañez, a professor at the Bicol University College of Engineering, at higher levels of contamination. It looks fit for clothing, for adults.

Ibañez also described another study showing a periodic scarcity of water due to climatic and topographical changes commonly affecting springs. An example, the erstwhile popular for springs in Daraga town in Albay, home to the Cheviron geothermal plant, have already dried up, leading to the closure of many resorts.

Biggest in the country

The new clean water technology is the biggest of its kind in the country and the first to be run by Phil-Hydro, says its chief operating officer, Rolando Mangalabayan. It converts surface water, such as that from rivers, into water of "limited quality," he says.

Phil-hydro is committed to supply at least 20,000 cubic meters of water per day.

"It will be environment-friendly if we stop drilling holes. Surface water, unlike groundwater, is free from salt intrusion," Mangalabayan told Manila to free ED technology used," he says.

Water from the rivers can be put to good use before it is finished nor is the sea to mix with salt water, says Mangalabayan, who is an environmental engineer and a former agriculture-related undersecretary.

In opposing the project, the Legazpi City Shareholders Federation Inc. (LCSFI) claims that no proper public consultation was held regarding the changes in water supply system and rates. The group has 3,000 members, according to the Community Organization of the Philippines Enterprise (COPE) Foundation.

Together with COSE, the LCSFI plans to file a petition to the city council asking for a comprehensive investigation of the project.

"The rate increase is unjustifiable since many of the people here are in the brink of poverty, especially after the series of calamities that hit the province," says Buenaventura de la Torre, COPE's assistant regional coordinator. He adds that a rate increase is not a solution for an efficient water service.

Squatters say a water rate increase is not a solution for an efficient water service

But Bercilon says a careful study on the city's water supply situation was made before the LWUA recommended a "justified" increase. Nine of the city's 35 villages have less or no supply of water during peak hours, while five still do not have distribution lines, she says.

A public hearing was held on Dec. 21 last year to discuss the increase, but only 120 consumers came, she adds.

It was not a public consultation at all, for la Torre says, and the place was not accessible to many people.

According to Bercilon, LWUA representatives were there to listen to the sentiments of the public. "It is only after the public hearing that the LWUA can confirm the increase to implementation. Until now, we are still waiting for the confirmation," she says.

Gonzalo Gomez, 53, one of the water district subscribers from Barangay Bariday, does not favor the increase. "Dati tayong sawa-an will be in favor of any increase. Money is hard to come these days," he says in the vernacular.

"I will just reinstall my old water pump, if we could no longer pay our water bill."

Villagers rely on rain gauges

STORM-PRONE BICOL NO longer has a weather radar, but disaster officials in Albay are pinning their hopes on small and simple rain gauges to save lives.

At least 13 digital rain gauges have been installed in seven towns and two cities of the province, and 12 more are coming, courtesy of the Social Action Center of the Archdiocese of Legazpi.

Cedric Daep, executive officer of the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council, said early warning devices would also be given to communities so that information would be relayed fast to residents.

Disaster officials have been trained to interpret data from the wired rain gauges, which cost almost P3,000 each and placed in municipal halls. The gauges can detect possible landslides, lahar and flooding through scenarios carefully devised by the PDCC.

When the device records rainfall of 1 millimeter per minute, mudflows from Mayon Volcano are likely to occur, Daep said. A 7.2 mm per hour rainfall could mean heavy flooding, especially in low-lying areas.

Daep explained that the criteria were based on localized conditions and might not be applicable to other provinces. "We will be testing the system for three years until such time we have gathered the accuracy of our forecasted criteria for data interpretation," he said.

Since the multimillion-peso weather radar in Guinobatan was destroyed between the late 1990s and the early 2000s, disaster officials have difficulty predicting rain conditions, Daep said.

Moreover, the public storm warning signal being issued by the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) pertains more to wind conditions, he said.

But Albay is not only vulnerable to strong winds but also to rain-induced hazards, like lahar, flooding and landslides, Daep said.

Instead of the people waiting for disaster warnings from the national level, he said, the community could generate real-time warnings. "Through this system, warning information can be relayed overnight to the affected population," Daep said.

Readings from the rain gauges have equivalent stages to disaster management, such as alert, preparedness and evacuation levels. Since local conditions can be defined, village officials can order an evacuation and will just have to inform the municipal government and the PDCC for support, Daep said.

The council, however, will still inform local government units of general warnings from national agencies, such as Pagasa.

Updated reports from the PDCC show that lahar risk is high in 28 villages in four towns and one city in Albay. A total of 106 villages, zones and streets in 30 towns and two cities have landslide-prone areas, while 204 villages, zones and streets in 11 towns and three cities have flood-prone areas. *Ephraim Aguilar*

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INVITATION TO BID

The Misamis Oriental – 1 Rural Electric Service Cooperative, Inc. (MORESCO - 1) has made available the amount of FOURTEEN MILLION PESOS AND 00/100 (PhP14,000,000.00) which is the approved budget cost (ABC) toward the cost of 10 MVA Power Transformer and associated goods and services. Bids higher than the ABC shall automatically be rejected.

The MORESCO-1 now invites Sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the supply of Materials and Equipment for:

10 MVA POWER TRANSFORMER

Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information and inspect the Bidding Documents at the Secretariat of MORESCO – 1 Bids & Awards Committee.

Bidding Documents may be purchased, starting 16 January 2008 by an interested eligible Bidder upon submission of a letter of intent and upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Ten Thousand Philippine Pesos (P 10,000.00).

Sealed envelopes containing the technical and financial proposals in separate envelopes duly marked as such will be received by the BAC at OGM Conference Room on or before 10:00 a.m., February 1, 2008 at which time and place the technical proposals will be opened and evaluated. The financial proposals of bidders found eligible to bid will then be opened and read in the presence of Bidders or Bidders' representatives who choose to attend, otherwise, they will be returned unopened to ineligible bidders.

A pre-bid conference will be held on January 25, 2008 at 10:00 a.m., at the OGM Conference Room.

All bids submitted must be accompanied by a bid security, in cash or cashier's check, in the amount equivalent to 2.5% of the amount of bid. This bid security shall be valid for at least 150 days, starting from the date of bid opening.

The Misamis Oriental – 1 Rural Electric Cooperative, Inc. hereby reserves the right to reject any or all bids without disclosing any reason, to waive any minor defects or infirmities therein and to accept such bid as may be considered most advantageous to the Electric Cooperative.

(Sgd.) **FERMIN V. JARALES**
Chairman, PBAC

NEWS

Reporter helped Faeldon escape

Despite GMA, they have no regrets on Edsa 2

By Jerome Aning

THREE YOUNG LEFTIST LEADERS who participated in the second Edsa "People Power" revolt in 2001 have no regrets about having helped anti-president Macapagal-Arroyo to power even if her administration turned out to be "even worse" than the one it toppled.

In a press conference in Quezon City, Edsa-2 youth and student leaders Raymond Palatino, Cristina Palabay and Renato Reyes Jr. shared their views and the lessons they learned from the bloodless revolt, popularly known as "Edsa Dos," that took place Jan. 17-20 and led to the ouster of President Joseph Estrada.

Palatino was then chair of the University of the Philippines student council, Palabay was chair of the National Union of Students of the Philippines, while Reyes was chair of the militant youth group Kabataan.

"The question being asked repeatedly is: After seven years of the Arroyo government, do we regret ever joining Edsa 2? Our answer is 'No,' said Palatino.

Higher ideals

"With due respects to groups in the political opposition, we believe there were higher ideals involved in Edsa 2. We certainly didn't go there because we wanted Mrs. Arroyo in her presidency," he added.

Both student groups participated in Edsa 2 by the thousands, spurred by invitations and appeals for solidarity sent via text messages and the Internet. They joined other protesters assembled at the Our Lady of Edsa Shrine in Ortigas, delivering fiery speeches before marching to Gen. Chino Roces Bridge near Malacañang in the final hours of the Estrada presidency.

Palatino, Reyes and Palabay, now leaders of major militant groups all critical of the Arroyo administration—several the repressed deployment of some 10,000 policemen in Metro Manila to secure the Edsa Shrine and patrol the streets in time for the commemoration of Edsa 2.

"This is another windfall thanks to the perceived flimsy governance. The regime continues to concoct threats of destabilization in order to justify more repression," said Reyes, current secretary general of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) group.

Police, not people power

"Even ironic that in the coming days, the government will be previewing police power instead of 'people power,'" he added.

For statement, the youth leaders said the people have all the right to take Mrs. Arroyo to task for the outrages and crimes committed under her regime since it was the people who supported her ascent to the presidency in the first place.

"Arroyo has been in power for seven years, the longest for any Philippine president after Marcos. It has sunk to the level of a morally bankrupt regime. The people have every right to express their disgust and outrage over what has become of the Arroyo presidency," Reyes added.

Palatino, now the president of the Kalusugan pamplhet group, recalled that in the days leading to Edsa 2, it did not matter who would be taking over the government, as long as Estrada was deposed.

"For many of us, the higher motivation for Edsa 2 was the desire for good governance, for changes in the way government was being run. Sad as it didn't happen because we were focusing more personality to become president," he recalled.

Wasted years

The three leading Edsa 2 veterans, however, said they felt the years Arroyo spent in power have largely been wasted.

"Though she became the main beneficiary, she threw away every opportunity to make a difference and to institute reforms," Palatino said.

Palabay, the current secretary general of the Gabriela Women's Party, said Edsa 2 showed that simply changing the president was not enough to bring about meaningful change, adding, "The cancerous rot of the system is such that change from the top doesn't necessarily translate to far-reaching reforms."

"Still, the fact that people were empowered during those four days, that's a very important thing to itself. It's a big advance. People learned to assert their rights by exercising their sovereign will through direct action. It was good for the democratic process," she said.

The three Edsa 2 leaders all agreed that while Edsa 2 led to "an even worse" regime, they believed that "people power was still the way to go."

Various anti-Arroyo groups are planning to hold a rendezvous on Jan. 20 to mark seven years of the Arroyo administration. Among those expected are leaders of the opposition, civil society groups, church leaders, members of the academic and various cause-oriented formations.

"I don't think people will go there to celebrate. It will be more of a protest meeting seven years of a bankrupt regime," Reyes said.

EDSA DOS. All alone moving Estrada, not installing Arroyo.

But Razon says PNP won't file charges yet

By Alvin Paga

MANILA MAYOR LITO MEMOR ORDER stopped arrest during the Nov. 29 Manila Peninsula disorder crash with the help of a reporter, Philippine National Police Chief Director General Avelino Razon said yesterday.

Razon refused to identify the media personality who has so far escaped being charged.

The PNP chief said the police had no reason for not filing charges against the reporter.

"It's a higher consideration," Razon said without elaborating.

But he did not rule out charging the reporter at a later time with aiding and abetting a criminal as well as rebellion.

Razon said the PNP conducted an investigation after receiving reports that the reporter had helped Faeldon to escape.

"We were able to ascertain that the reporter assisted in Faeldon's escape," he said.

Caught on camera

He said the police were able to confirm this through the hotel's closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras and from witnesses' testimony. "And we didn't just talk to one person," Razon said.

Faeldon was with the grouped junior officers and his boss Antonio Trillanes IV when walked out of a court hearing on their coup d'etat case for the failed July 2003 coup at the Makati city hall last Nov. 29, and seized the Manila Peninsula hotel, demanding a change of government. The self-styled Magdalo group of officers surrendered five hours later after loyal troops stormed the hotel.

Police earlier said that Faeldon, who carries a P1 million reward for his arrest, escaped during the police assault by posing as a member of media.

Reporters who refused to leave the hotel despite police warnings were later rounded up and handcuffed and brought to a police headquarters in Fairview for "verification." Media organizations protested the arrest, saying reporters were just doing their job.

Slippery

The slippery Faeldon has escaped once before by giving his guards the slip in December 2003 during another hearing in Makati. He was re-arrested in January 2006.

The PNP has released a wanted poster of Faeldon and other escaped Magdalo soldiers who participated in the Manila Peninsula caper.

Meanwhile, Senate Manila Police Director Geary Barias has expressed frustration over the interpretations with the media on the policy and rules on crisis coverage.

Barias told a forum yesterday that he did not consider a verbal agreement between government and media sufficient to govern coverage in such occasions.

Barias said he fears that a member of the press would be injured or killed in a coverage to obtain favor in exchange of goodies.

"In the Manila Bay, we were lucky because no one got killed. But if somebody died, who will be held responsible?" Barias said.

"I think if somebody had been shot, I would have been held liable. I don't think that's fair," said Barias, adding that this was something that should be discussed in further dialogues with the press.

"That's the reality. That's a very simple concern of every policeman," he said. *With a report from Kristine L. Alave*

Police may use 'reasonable force' against journalists

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL POLICE (PNP) clarified yesterday that it would only use "reasonable" or "necessary" force to take journalists out of the line of fire in a crisis situation.

PNP Chief Director General Avelino Razon told reporters that they are continuing to work closely with media to look for a solution to the issue.

"We will continue to work closely with our friends from the media. We will try to find ways and means to attain the objective of [allowing] media to cover the events and police to monitor safeguarding and protecting lives and property," said Razon.

He added that the situation does not have to reach a point where police will have to arrest and handcuff media.

But Razon explained that while the police are not to prevent any doubts or damage to property by advising media to get out of the way, a measure of "necessary force" would be used to eject media from the premises. *Alvin Paga*

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Editor Rose Q. Dipasupil

DID YOU KNOW

ON DEC. 13, 1988, then President Corazon Aquino signed Republic Act 6975 which created the Department of Interior and Local Government and established the Philippine National Police. More than a month later, the PNP officially replaced the Philippine Constabulary and the Integrated National Police.

The PNP, with headquarters at Camp Crame in Quezon City, is mandated to enforce laws protecting lives and property, prevent crimes, investigate crimes, effect the arrest of offenders and assist in their prosecution.

On March 31, 1991, after a transitory period, Cesario appointed Cesar Nazarenus as the first PNP director general. —**Cynthia Balana, Inquirer Research**

INSET LIFE
A man takes a nap on top of a piece of driftwood he converted into an improvised bed near the Manila Yacht Club on Roxas Boulevard in Manila. —EDWARD AGUILAR

Cops nab teener linked to murder

Suspect admits he killed retired teacher inside her house in QC

By Jeannette I. Andrade

FOUR DAYS AFTER THE SKELETAL REMAINS OF a retired teacher was found inside her house in Quezon City, the police arrested a 17-year-old high school student who confessed to killing the victim.

The suspect, whom the police did not name because he is a minor, told the investigators that he killed Antonia Peregrino, 78, at her house on Sunday to get her wedding gift hidden in a box.

The boy was arrested on Jan. 14, more than six months after he said he killed Peregrino, his neighbor on Sunset Village, 8th Avenue, Fairview in Tandang Sora, Quezon City.

Other angles

Bystanders rushed the victim to the East Avenue Medical Center where doctors declared him dead on arrival.

Police investigators said they were looking into angles apart from robbery to explain the attack on Sept. 10.

The suspect, a student of the Tandang Sora National High School, told the police that he killed the victim on July 6. He said he put a pillow over the victim's face and strangled her as she pleaded with tears to quit.

There he and her spy with a spoon cut up the was gasping for breath before burying her beneath a pile of clothes inside the bathroom.

All alone

"I knew she was living alone. I sneaked into her house when she went out to her garden. I waited for her to enter and tried to suffocate her with a pillow," the boy told the police.

"I blacked out. Everything went black. I was just so angry," he added. The suspect also confessed to stealing the victim's remote control and the source of several appliances, plus some cigarettes, and selling them after the incident.

No fear

Investigators of the Quezon City Police District-Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit said the suspect told them that after killing the victim, he went deep in her bedroom several times.

"He told us that he never minded the smell of the rotting corpse and keep the former closed," SPO2 Rafael de Mesa of the QCPD-CIDU said.

Investigators were conducting a routine questioning of the victim's neighbors—the boy's siblings, whom someone suggested that they could be the suspect who was scraping with his grandmother in Bulacan.

When the police came for him in Bulacan, the boy, who later said he was stricken by his conscience, confessed to killing the victim.

The teenager has been charged with robbery and murder in the Quezon City Prosecutor's Office.

Recruitment firm manager shot dead

By Jeannette I. Andrade

THREE MOTORCYCLE-RIDING men yesterday robbed and then shot the operations manager of a recruitment agency as he was walking to his office located near his house in Quezon City.

Rene Sac-an, 46, a resident of K-6 Street in Barangay West Kamias, died while he was being treated in a hospital.

Police said Sac-an lived a retired motorcycle with license plate TM 5444 after the incident which happened at 8:15 a.m. yesterday.

PO2 Pascual Subong of the Quezon City Police District Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit said Sac-an was walking toward the E and G Recruitment and Placement agency at the corner of Kamias Road and K-6 Street when three men on a motorcycle accosted him.

Brandishing .45 caliber pistols, the unidentified men took the victim's P1,500 in cash, several ATM cards, a cell phone and a wristwatch.

They then shot him four times before fleeing toward Sikatuna Village.

Other angles

Bystanders rushed the victim to the East Avenue Medical Center where doctors declared him dead on arrival.

Police investigators said they were looking into angles apart from robbery to explain the attack on Sac-an.

LRTA says it can't give free rides to seniors

By Ria T. Dishaunday

UNLIKE THE METRO RAIL TRANSIT 3, THE Light Rail Transit Authority will not be offering free rides to senior citizens at the moment.

LRTA spokesperson Jinky Jorgio said the other day that the railway firm has already been giving discounts to the elderly as mandated by law.

She added that if they were giving free rides, other groups may ask for the same privilege.

That could present a problem for the LRTA because it relies on the fares it collects to meet its operating costs and other expenses.

The other day, the MRT 3 announced it would be giving free rides to senior citizens in partnership with UNTV Channel 37's "Good Morning Kuya," a morning show.

The elderly, however, would have to march the show to find out which MRT stations would be giving out the tickets that would entitle them to free rides. The promo is from Jan. 15 this year to Jan. 15, 2009.

The announcement, however, caused some confusion yesterday as some senior citizens at some MRT stations demanded that they be allowed to ride for free.

"Our fare is the cheapest in Asia and we receive no subsidy for our operation and maintenance. We get our operations and maintenance funds from the fare," Jorgio said.

"We have already deferred fare increase. The last time we raised the fare was in 2003," she added.

The LRTA operates the LRT Line 1 which plys the Baclaran to Monumento route and Line 2, which runs from Santolan to Recto.

HOW TO START AND MANAGE A SUCCESSFUL REALTY BROKERAGE COMPANY
URBAN INSTITUTE OF REAL ESTATE

RJ guitars destroyed in San Juan fire

By Kristine L. Alave

MUSICAL INSTRUments worth at least P2 million were destroyed when a blaze consumed a guitar store owned by one of Ramon "RJ" Jacinto in San Juan City on Tuesday afternoon.

According to Chandler Arnaldo, a fire inspector of the San Juan City Fire Department, the fire started in the kitchen area of the store located along Pinaglabanan Avenue in Barangay St. Joseph.

Arnaldo said an employee of the store saw the fire start at the ceiling of the kitchen which quickly spread across the room.

The blaze started around 4 p.m. and was put out three hours later, the fire inspector added.

No one was hurt or injured in the incident. The fire cost P2 million worth of property, including musical instruments.

The cause of the blaze has not yet been determined although investigators said they would check the store's electrical wiring.

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID
The Government of the Philippines (GOP), through the Bids and Awards Committee for the Philippine Government Properties in Japan (BAC-Japan), invites interested proponents to participate in a public bidding for the right in operating the Fujita Property of the Philippine Government in Tokyo, Japan.
Interested proponents may purchase the Terms of Reference for the Fujita Property from the BAC-Japan at a non-refundable fee of US$1,000.00, payable by cash or cashier's/manager's check to the Department of Finance at the address indicated below beginning on 17 January 2008 until 28 January 2008, from 9 am until 4 pm. The Terms of Reference includes terms of all documents required to participate in the bid as well as detailed information about the Fujita Property.
BAC-JAPAN Secretariat
DF, DOF Building
Department of Finance
BSP Complex, Roxas Boulevard
Philippines
Attention: Ms. Petrie Fy
Tel. No. 524-5133
Fax No. 5207143
Deadline for submission by interested Parties of their Letter of Intent shall be on 28 January 2008 (Monday) no later than 5:00 p.m.
The Pre-bid Conference for all interested proponents who have purchased the bid documents shall be held at 2:00 p.m. on 29 January 2008 at the 6F, DOF Building, Department of Finance, BSP Complex, Roxas Boulevard, Philippines.
Deadline for submission and Opening of the Proposals / Technical and Financial Bids shall be at 3:00 p.m. on 29 January 2008 at the 6F, DOF Building, Department of Finance, BSP Complex, Roxas Boulevard, Philippines.
Any questions may be addressed to the BAC-Japan at the address and/or telephone numbers indicated above.
The Government of the Philippines assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.
(Sgd.) GILBERTO A. MENDOZA, JR.
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METROBRIEFS

Eco-park to rise in Valenzuela

MANILA, THE PHILIPPINES — A new eco-park will be put up in a one-hectare swampy area in Valenzuela which had been declared by the city as a no-fill sanctuary.

Mayor Bernardo Sabolboro said yesterday, "We have allocated a budget to develop the area into a park to cope up for residents' encroachment of the area. The eco-park will serve as a recreational area for residents and a learning center for students on the importance of protecting their environment and at the same time, to attract tourists to the city," Sabolboro said. The first batches of unemployed residents in this Metropolitan Manila city will be hired to work in the eco-park.

Sabolboro, Barangay Malanday has been home to hundreds of displaced residents after typhoon Ondoy hit the city last September. Ondoy submerged 80 percent of the city, including Malanday, rendering thousands of residents homeless. Sabolboro said the eco-park is one of the projects which will help in the rehabilitation of the barangay. — Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz

Teenager arrested for theft

MEISI-TEAR-OLD boy landed in jail for possession of a stolen shotgun in Malabon City on Monday. City police chief, Senior Supt. Isidro Rivera, identified the suspect as Philip Ramirez of Pangarap Ave. 11 Brgy. Barangay Concepcion Dos. Ramirez said an 18-inch knife was found in Ramirez's possession when he was arrested. Ramirez was arrested while carrying a shotgun in front of the house of a resident in Valley Executive Village, Barangay Ibo. Elite Security guards at the subdivision arrested the suspect after a resident reported that a man was trying to flag cops and bribing some for the cash. The cops was later discovered to have been visited by the suspect. — Mancy C. Carvajal

PLDT exec loses valuables to crack burglar

By Jeannette I. Andrade

A BURGLAR DESCRIBED BY POLICEMEN as an "agile and professional building climber" made off with more than P100,000 worth of electronic gadgets and valuables from the four-story Quezon City home of an official of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. in Quezon City on Tuesday.

The theft was reported only yesterday morning to the police by the victim, PLDT senior manager Irene Ofilan.

Investigators of the Quezon City Police District Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit said the burglar scaled the 12-meter high adjacent fence building next to the victim's metallic protrusions and anything he could get a grip on to get to the roof and break into Ofilan's house on Road 1 in Project 6.

He lost an iron notebook worth P75,000, a Nokia 1,100 cell phone worth P2,500, and an SX SIM mini worth P40,000.

Ofilan told the police that he left the door to the living room before he went to bed at around midnight Monday.

He also lost his wallet which contained his automated teller machine and identification cards.

The complainant told investigators that he found the ATM holder and several documents in the roof which was probably left behind by the thief.

Sumilao farmers reject SMC offer

SAN MIGUEL CORP. (SMC), IN A bid to appease the 50 or so farmers of Sumilao, Bukidnon, has offered to give them another piece of land and jobs for their families.

But you know what? The farmers declined the offer!

They're being offered another piece of land in the town, as big as the farmland they want to get from San Miguel Foods Inc. (SMFI), SMC's affiliate firm.

Plus jobs for them and members of their families in the 344-hectare agro-industrial complex within the 4,000-hectare land bank.

And they refuse?

Umm pay lapong gusto mga ito gulay! (What else do you want, my friends?)

* * *

The generous offer was made by Ramon Ang, president and chief operating officer of SMC, to Bishop Broderick Pabillo, head of the Catholic Church's Task Force on Sumilao.

It was a "win-win" solution to the festering land problem in the Bukidnon town that has caught the attention of the national government.

If the offer had been accepted, both sides—SMC and the farmers—would have come out happy.

SMFI would retain the land in question and get on with its multi-billion peso project in the province.

The farmers, for their part, would get land the same size as the piece of real estate they want now, plus jobs for them and their families.

It would have been an offer that was hard to refuse.

There's a word to describe the reason for the farmers' rejection of the handsome offer: Greed.

The farmers, who are backed by the Catholic Church, want the property not because the property is "rightfully belongs to them." They want to get hold of the 144 hectares of land because it has been developed.

SMFI has already put in millions of pesos to develop the hacienda land.

The number of the farmers is expecting the offer is very apparent.

Sad, sad to say, the Church is feeding on their greed, one of the cardinal sins.

* * *

This corner was not referring to Mandaluyong City Mayor Benhur Abalos when it repeated that a young politician was a member of a syndicate that fixed weddings in Metro Manila.

Abalos, son of the former Comelec chair, is president of the Metropolitan Association of Barangay Councils (MABC).

I was referring to another young politician who is also very much involved in horse racing. He journalist politicians being alluded to was supposedly groaning from not to eat because many racing aficionados thought it was Abalos, and not he, who was the suspect.

Or should laugh out loud—the irony?

This corner may yet have the last laugh.

* * *

I don't know if the new head of the Bureau of Customs Enforcement and Security Service (BEES), retired police general, Nicasio Bañaosan, knows this, but some of his subordinates have apparently collected P500,000 for the reinstatement of his office.

The reinvention money was in addition to the "usual" or tong for the new BEES head, the collection of which, in his case is Bañaosan, his fellow authorities.

Half a million pesos for reinventing a small office?

Isn't the money supposed to come from the customs bureau and not from importers?

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JV may have to postpone senatorial bid, says Erap

By Kristine L. Alave

IT LOOKS LIKE SAN JUAN MAYOR Joseph Victor "JV" Ejercito would have to wait a few more years before offering "reserve" in his name.

Former President Joseph Estrada said the other day that it appears his son with former actress-senator Jinggoy Estrada, Gaia Gomez would have to postpone his bid for a seat in the Senate to 2010.

In a meeting with business owners on Wednesday night, Estrada said Ejercito might run for a seat in the House of Representatives instead. The post is currently held by Rep. Ronaldo Zamora.

According to Estrada, the Senate seat is a cause of argument between his son, now-Senator Jinggoy Estrada, and "I fighting." Estrada said, reminding he is the older son, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada.

In an interview with Ejercito last week, the mayor said he plans for 2010 would depend on Jinggoy's cues.

"My brother will be running for re-election or another higher position. It will be hard to campaign, so I have two members of the family campaign for a senatorial post at the same time," Ejercito explained.

If Jinggoy decides to run again for senator, Ejercito said he would have no choice but to run for congressman. "Of course, the initial problem would be the machinery. Right now, running for Congress would be an option in case the opposition slate (for senator) would be filled up or if my brother backs out/retires," he said.

There are speculations as to who would take Ejercito's place in San Juan. Following reports that he would be running for senator in San juan's elections, talks circulated that he would field his mother for the mayoral post.

Jinggoy, on the other hand, was reportedly bent on making his wife, Precy, run for the congress seat.

Estrada said that if both JV or succeeding before Ejercito decided to withdraw his bid for a seat in the Senate and run for a local post instead.

Philippine Economic Zone Authority

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Region X, Legaspi City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

MMTA MOVIE GUIDE
METRO MANILA THEATER ASSOCIATION
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Plague a growing but overlooked threat, warns study

LONDON—PLAGUE, THE DISease that devastated medieval Europe, is re-emerging worldwide and poses a growing but overlooked threat, researchers warned on Tuesday.

While it has only killed some 100 to 200 people annually over the past 10 years, plague has reappeared in various countries in several decades and is now shifting into Africa, Michael Begon, an ecologist at the University of Liverpool and colleagues said.

A bacterium known as Yersinia pestis causes bubonic plague, known in medieval times as the Black Death when it was spread by infected fleas, and the more dangerous pneumonic plague, spread from one person to another through coughing or sneezing.

"Although the number of human cases of plague is relatively low, it would be a mistake to overlook its threat to humanity, because of the disease's infectious communicability, rapid spread, rapid clinical course, and high mortality if left undetected," they wrote in the journal Public Library of Science Journal Biology.

Endemic foci of plague, which is virtually impossible to wipe out and moves through the animal world as a constant threat to humans, Begon said. Both rodents and fleas can kill outside days if not treated with antibiotics.

"You can't realistically get rid of all the rodents in the world," he said in a telephone interview. "Plague appears to lie on the increase, and for the first time there have been major outbreaks in Africa."

Globally the World Health Organization reports about 1,000 to 3,000 plague cases each year, with most in the last five years occurring in Madagascar, Tanzania, Mozambique, Malawi, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The United States sees about 10 to 20 cases each year.

More worrying are outbreaks seen on the rise after years of relative inactivity in the 20th century, Begon said. The most recent large pneumonic outbreak comprised hundreds of suspected cases in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2000.

Bubonic plague, called the Black Death because of black lumps that sometimes develop on victims' bodies, causes severe vomiting and high fever. Victims of pneumonic plague have massive symptoms but not the black lumps.

Begon and his colleagues called for more research into better ways to prevent plague from striking areas where people lack access to life-saving drugs and to defend against the disease if used as a weapon.

"We should not overlook the fact that plague has been weaponized throughout history, from catapulting corpses over city walls, to dropping infected fleas from airplanes, to refined modern aerosol formulation," the researchers wrote. Reuters

WorldBriefs

Bus bombing

COLOMBO—At least 23 people were killed and 87 injured on Wednesday in a suspected Tamil Tiger bomb attack on a crowded bus in southeast Sri Lanka, the defense ministry said. Officials said the bus, traveling from Batticaloa to Dehiwala, was hit by a powerful claymore-type mine—a bomb packed with explosives and ball bearings—apparently hidden on the bus or detonated on the roadside. "Twenty-three civilians were killed and 87 were injured in the explosion," a statement said. AFP

Israel official quits

JERUSALEM—Israel's Shin Bet (Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman on Wednesday quit the cabinet in order that not unlike Prime Minister Ehud Barak's government, he would not be responsible for the Yasser Arafat government's retreat in the face of violence, a spokesman said. AFP

Female bomber

BAGHDAD—A female suicide bomber blew herself apart as Iraq celebrated a Ramadan feast north of Baghdad on Wednesday, killing at least eight people, a local source in Samarra said. The attacker exploded her bomb-laden belt and killed three members of her family, including her father Abu Said, 50 km north of Baghdad, one hospital official told Reuters. Samarra is the capital of Salahaddin province. "At least eight people have died and scores are wounded," said Ahmed Karim, a doctor. The number of casualties is expected to rise as many of the injured people have died en route to hospitals in Baghdad as they could not be transported to the nearby hospitals. Reuters

Beirut blast

BEIRUT—A car bomb damaged a US diplomatic car in Beirut on Tuesday, killing at least three people and wounding 15, and the US State Department said the American dead in the blast. The bomb went off as the motorcade of Ambassador Vincent Battle, the US envoy to Lebanon, was passing through a residential area of the Christian suburb of Baabda, 10 km (six miles) south of the capital. Reuters

Gaza violence

GAZA CITY—Israeli troops killed 19 Palestinians on Tuesday, including the son of a top Hamas leader, as fighting erupted around the Gaza Strip a day after the start of key Middle East peace talks. The deadliest single day of violence in more than a year saw the son of Khalil al-Qaqa, a senior Hamas official, killed. AFP

US authorities approve cloned animal foods

WASHINGTON—THE US FOOD safety authority on Tuesday approved meat and milk from cloned animals, clearing the way for them one day to appear on store shelves despite opposition mobilized and fought by consumer groups.

"Meat and milk from clones of cattle, swine, and goats, and the offspring of clones from any species traditionally consumed as food, are as safe to eat as food from conventionally bred animals," Food and Drug Administration (FDA) official Randall Lutter told a news conference.

Lutter said his agency would not require food made from cloned animals or their offspring to be specially labeled, but producers could apply for the right to label items from "clean lines." The FDA however said it did not have enough information yet to say whether cloned sheep and other cloned animals were safe to eat.

The agency unveiled an advisory report based on six years of risk assessment studies to decide whether to give the green light for marketing foods from clones.

The ruling was debated by strong resistance from food safety and animal rights groups, as well as the US dairy industry, which fears its image and exports will be damaged.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) said cloned animal foods should not be marketed for the time being, pending consultation on introducing them.

"USDA is encouraging the biotechnology producers to maintain their voluntary moratorium on sending milk and meat from animal clones into the food supply during this transition time," US Deputy Secretary Richard Knight told reporters.

The European Commission also vowed to consult consumers before giving its own ruling in May. The European Food Safety Authority stood solid last July from healthy cattle and pig clones is probably safe for humans to eat.

A Washington-based campaign group, the Center for Food Safety, condemned Tuesday's announcement.

"The FDA's hallmarked action today disregards the will of the public and the Senate—and opens cloned Pandora's Box," the group's director Andrew Kimbrell said in a statement.

"FDA based their decision on an incomplete and flawed review that relies on studies supplied by cloning companies that want to force cloning technology on American consumers." US senators last month passed a farm bill that included a measure requiring the FDA to delay its ruling until further studies are carried out.

One of the sponsors of that measure, Maryland Democrat Barbara Mikulski, accused the FDA of acting "recklessly" on Tuesday.

"Safe because something was created in a lab, doesn't mean we should have to eat it," she said in a statement.

"If we discover a problem with cloned food, we'll allow it in, it can be on the market for a year, and then it's too late," she added. AFP

Bush wraps up ME visit, heads for Egypt

GANAAL EL-SHEIKH, EGYPT—US President George W. Bush wraps up his Middle East tour in Egypt on Wednesday seeking and issuing wholesale backing from Arab allies for his efforts to seal a peace deal and defeat Iraq.

Bush is due to arrive in the Red Sea resort of Sharm al-Sheikh around midday after flying in Israeli Israeli and Israeli Knight into talks with President Hosni Mubarak on a three-hour visit that is seen as more political than politics.

The stop comes at the end of a tour which has seen Bush try to drum up Arab support for his plan to oust Iraq's President Saddam Hussein from power in the three months since he succeeds his father in January 2009 as well as Washington's ties off with Iran.

Relations with Egypt have come a downturn over Washington's criticism of Cairo's proposed bid to overturn its boycott with the Gaza Strip, now run by the Islamist Hamas movement regarded as a terror group by Israel and the West.

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has, along with Israel, urged Cairo to do more to stop arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip.

Bush's meeting with Mubarak is the first round

The WORLD

Edna Lawrence B. Cuaso

Starfish outbreak destroying coral reefs in Asia

SYDNEY (AFP)—Outbreaks of the notorious crown of thorns starfish is wreaking havoc in Asia's famous Coral Triangle, where it has destroyed large swathes of coral reefs, scientists in Indonesia and Australia said.

The predator starfish feeds on corals by spreading its stomach over them and eating digestive enzymes as liquefy them.

The researchers found large numbers of them in Halmahera, Indonesia, which lies on the fringes of the Coral Triangle.

During a research trip in December, they saw a stretch of reef measuring 30 km in extremity—was completely wiped out.

"It's quite a stark sight. The crowns of thorns choose to eat some species, like staghorn corals, the branching corals disappear and you are left with just a rubble pit," Andrew Baird of the Australia Research Council's Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies and James Cook University told by telephone.

Baird said the outbreak was caused by poor water quality and could be an early warning of widespread reef decline.

"Humans are exacerbating the problem because we put too many nutrients in the water," he said, referring to water pollution caused by sewerage and agricultural fertilizers.

"There are lots of micro-algae and the larvae of the crown of thorns feed on the algae," said Baird, who was involved in the study.

The survey was carried out by the Wildlife Conservation Society and the WCC. The researchers hope to publish their findings this year.

The Coral Triangle is between the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. It is seen as the world's richest center of coral reef biodiversity and the greatest concentration of coral diversity on Australia's Great Barrier Reef, Ningaloo reef other reefs in the region.

The Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) announced at the Bali Climate Change Conference recently offered hope for the reefs but the researchers said it gave few details on how it will work.

Baird and urgent action was needed to clean up the seas and stop all destructive forms of fishing, such as dynamite and overfishing.

"If dramatic steps are not taken, in 30 to 50 years, there will be practically no reefs, and certainly no healthy reefs in the Coral Triangle and that's just from human impacts."

THRIVING shows crowns of thorns starfish on corals. Outbreaks of the starfish are threatening Indonesia's portion of the "coral triangle," the richest area of coral reef biodiversity on the planet, scientists warned. —

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND EMPLOYMENT
National Capital Region
[illegible]

NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office applications for Alien Employment Permits:

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National/ Citizenship	Position
BAUHAUS TECHNOLOGIES, INC. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
KRISTIE JOSEPH RUIZ CORPORATION [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
BOSS PHILIPPINES CORPORATION [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
LOGOCONG (PHILIPPINES), INC. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
ZAGRO RESULZ SERVICES, INC. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
CONSERVLIT TECHNOLOGIES, INC. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
JZ WORLD CORP. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
SACOMPUTEN CORPORATION [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
REUTERS LIMITED [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
GLOBAL MARS SHARK'S FIN RESTAURANT, INC. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
ORIGINAL HAIR, INC. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
KABUTTEKI WORLD EXPRESS (PHILIPPINES) INC. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
PLAYWIN GAMING INC. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
RMAN SERVICES PTY. LTD. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
AIS BUSINESS PROCESSING SERVICES, INC. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
NICE SHOT GOLF TUTORIAL SERVICES [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
EASTRIS SHIP MANAGEMENT INC. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
PHILATOYSON (HAN, INC. [illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

If you have any information/objection to the abovementioned applications please communicate with the Regional Director.

RAYMUNDO D. HORMINDO
OIC, Regional Director

US intensifies offensive vs Taliban in Afghanistan

3,200 US Marines to be sent to war zone

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED States will send an additional force of about 3,200 Marines to Afghanistan this spring to help Nato troops and Afghan security forces confront ruling Taliban violence, the Pentagon said on Tuesday.

The US troop expansion, which increases the number of US forces deployed in Afghanistan by more than 20 percent, follows months of unsuccessful US efforts to persuade Nato allies to provide extra combat forces.

A Pentagon spokesperson insisted that the deployment did not eliminate the need for more Nato troops and the effort to persuade allies to send more forces would go on.

Moreover has surged in Afghanistan over the past two years, with the hard-line Islamist Taliban fighting a guerrilla war in the south and east and carrying out high-profile suicide and car bombings across the country.

Extra US combat forces are needed to help ensure an expected offensive by Taliban militants in secure such in the coming months, US defense officials say.

President George W. Bush approved the Marine deployment on the recommendation of Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

The Pentagon said 3,200 troops from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit would be sent in March to serve under the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in southern Afghanistan, where the Taliban resistance is strongest.

About 1,000 Marines from another battalion will deploy in April to expand training for Afghan national security forces.

"President Bush is committed to seeing an Afghanistan that is free of the Taliban and al Qaida and has an army and security force that can defend the country. These additional Marines will help deliver operations that threaten all of us," White House spokesperson Gordon Johndroe said.

Analysts said the Bush administration had found it could not get Nato allies to provide a large share of extra combat forces needed to southern Afghanistan or help clear and retain territory taken from militants.

"Nato's need is in the south at the moment. But what the US has found is that more Nato countries are not willing to deploy forces to conduct combat operations, where they're needed most," said Seth Jones, an Afghanistan expert at Rand Corp.

Pentagon spokesperson Geoff Morrell said the deployment would not eliminate the need for troops from Nato allies. "We're ready to show that this is serious months. This is a one-time deal, that's it," he told reporters.

"Beyond that we are going to need our allies' help to either backfill this deployment or perhaps match us in the numbers we're putting forth now," Morrell added. Reuters

Suharto fully conscious

JAKARTA—INDONESIA's former dictator Suharto was fully conscious and had eaten for his well on Wednesday, but he remained weak and in an unstable condition, doctors treating him in hospital said.

Suharto, who ruled the world's fourth most populous nation with an iron grip for more than three decades, has been clinging to life since he suffered multiple organ failure last week and was hooked up to a ventilator.

Doctors said Wednesday they had begun to wean him off the ventilator, but warned his general condition remained unstable.

"This morning I saw he was fully conscious despite being weak," said Hendri Soebandono, who heads the large team of specialist doctors assembled to treat Suharto.

He told reporters that when asked whether he felt well, the 86-year-old had replied, "Yes." But in a statement read out at a joint conference, Soebandono warned that "the functions of the heart and lungs are not yet stable, there is still an accumulation of fluid in the lungs and there are signs of systemic infection." AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE

■ **Cavs cage Grizzlies; Hawks up** /A23

SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Molmisa Jr. Assistant Editor Francis T. J. Ochoa

■ **Sharapova ousts 'mom'** /A24

MAKE no mistake about it, Jose Manuel Marquez (left) wants to talk of Manny Pacquiao's label as "The Mexican Killer."

LAST MAN STANDING

I want Manny so bad, says Marquez

By Roy Luarca

MANNY PACQUIAO HAS BEEN DUBBED "The Mexican killer" for beating the best fighters Mexico has to offer. Juan Manuel Marquez says the Filipino ring superstar doesn't deserve the moniker.

The 34th super featherweight champion, dubbed "The Last Mexican Standing" right-fully maintains that "he (Pacquiao) didn't beat me the first time."

Marquez, who's feeling intense nationalistic pressure to stop Pacquiao in their rematch on March 15, was referring to their first encounter on May 24, 2004 that ended in a draw even if Pacquiao had sent Marquez to the canvas thrice in the first round.

Finally standing mano-to-mano with Pacquiao during Tuesday's Wednesday in Manila's press conference, the Filipino Marquez II set of the Mandalay Bay Events Center in Las Vegas, Marquez resented Pacquiao's answers to one of the questions fielded.

Asked: "If you have Marquez, would you even dare vacation in Mexico?"

Pacquiao grinned, then said: "Maybe, but with security."

For Marquez, the reply was far from funny. "There is so much pride," Marquez said. "There is so much feeling in me. I want so badly to beat Manny."

His primary reason, of course, is to salvage Mexico pride which has been prided by Pacquiao's campaign over the country's best, including Hall of Famers Marco Antonio Barrera and Erik Morales.

Marquez, already looking fit and ready to defend the crown he wrested from Barrera last year, promised the audience he won't end up as another victim of Pacquiao's fury.

Like Marquez, Pacquiao is also brimming with patriotic fervor.

"There we go again," Pacquiao said. "It is not about the belt, it's about the honor of my country."

Pacquiao is gunning for his third world championship after winning the flyweight and junior featherweight titles.

For additional motivation, Pacquiao stands to receive about P400 million, counting PPV (pay-per-view revenues), his biggest paycheck ever.

The 34-year-old Marquez, on the other hand, settled for a lower amount just to earn the legacy that long eluded him.

"Maybe before I was just in the shadows," said Marquez, who's regarded below Barrera and Morales' look-iconic. "But I will demonstrate that I fight with heart and soul."

"The pressure which included a busy hands was well-attended by members of the Los Angeles media as well as out-of-town and international scribes and photographers," reported Ed De La Vega of Philboxing.com.

Close to 300 were present in the affair jointly hosted by Bob Arum, president of Top Rank, and Richard Schaefer, CEO of Golden Boy Promotions, at the Beverly Hills Hotel strong-boxed Boulevard in Los Angeles.

Correspondent CBS' and Top Rank have dubbed the rematch as "Unfinished Business," highlighting the fact that Pacquiao-Marquez I ended in a draw.

"There is a win that fight as we have many plans for more and bigger fights this year," Pacquiao told the gathering, referring to a possible June 28 bout in his next outing like-ly set in Mexico.

Pacquiao arrived in Los Angeles December night to attend the promotional launch and begin his preparations at the Wild Card Gym. (Government Antares Freddie Roach).

"This country deserves a title bout and I'll agree to a good fee boxing," said Roach. "That is going to be a huge fight." With reports from Inquirer/L. Augustin-boy and AP

Taulava powers Tigers past Pals

Red Bull wins fight-marred game; Board picks new commish today

By Marvong B. Castillo

ASI TAULAVA PROVIDED A LOT OF FIREWORKS ON the court—and off of it as well.

The 6-foot-10 behemoth scored 19 points and grabbed 13 rebounds for Coca-Cola in a 101-88 victory over Talk N Text last night that sealed a return match between the two clubs in the wild-card phase of the Smart PBA Philippine Cup of the Coca-Cola Foundation.

And after doing the damage on the floor, Taulava again took charge at the former team of almost 10 years, which fired him away last month in the season's most celebrated trade.

"There's a lot of fire in me and I don't think I am going to back down," Taulava said, post-mainers after the win. "We'll do whatever it takes to win against Talk N Text in the wild-card, because this win means nothing if we don't beat them again."

The victory actually meant nothing for the Tigers, but it was galling for the Phone Pals, who lost the chance to forge a playoff with idle Magnolia for the second No. 3 slot, the last automatic berth in the quarterfinals.

"Taulava must decide it twice," Tenebro added. "But I'll tell you here it really feels on Friday."

Talk N Text second tap with a 9-9 elimination round slate and drew the No. 9-seeded Tigers (7-11) as wild-card foes. Again, the eighth seed, clashes with defending champion Purefoods Giordano in a pair of 30 games tomorrow also at the Araneta, already assured of no outright semifinal slot, closed out with a second straight loss for it (2-6).

Meanwhile, the board meets this morning at the league's offices in Libis to decide who between lawyers Chito Salud and self-made television executive Sandrino Pamosa will be the seventh commissioner.

The meeting is set at 10 a.m., though the voting is not expected to happen until much later as the board drafts guidelines on how to break a potential fatal deadlock between the two remaining candidates.

Sources have said that the members continue to be divided as to the choice and that no board member has budged since the last time they voted on Dec. 17, when Salud drew a 5-4 edge over Pamosa.

A candidate needs six votes to win the post. The possibility of voting an ascot could be used if both battle to another eternal deadlock.

Tenorio
Fonteras

RED BULL (6)—Reyes 5, Fonteras 7, Jaspe 10, Pennisi 13, Arana 10, Sapida 8, Jaworski 10, Ponce 5, Perez 5, Dela Cruz 4, Dionisio 4, Mendoza 0.

PUREFOODS (96)—Cruz 17, Raymundo 12, Wright 10, Ilisan 0, Asinas 0, Ilisan 19, Ong 4, Lanete 2, Salvador 2, Yee 5, Sumagaysay (Caidic) 0.

Quarter Score

TALK N TEXT (101)—Gregorio 20, Jaspe 10, Tolentino 14, Taulava 19, Castro 9, Tenorio 7, Yap 7, Dalmacion 0, Montes 2, Gibson 2, Jimenez 0, Mercado 0.

COCA-COLA (88)—Wilson 19, Hamonglay 9, Hontiveros 0, Castro 10, Ibay 10, Bolano 14, Ilisan 10, Tenorio 2, Yap 4, Mercado 0, Gibson 0, Jimenez 0, Mercado 0.

Quarters: 22-18, 47-41, 70-58, 101-88.

PURSUYOOOY! allies-in-arms Jason Fuga (left) and Marlon Raymundo (right) apply a defensive squeeze on Red Bull's Leo Najorda.

PSA to honor RP SEA Games gold medalists in awards night

FILIPINO GOLD MEDALISTS IN THE record 24th Southeast Asian Games in Thailand will also be feted in the coming 36th Shipol Corporation/Philippine Sportswriters Association Awards Rites at the SM Mall of Asia in the second week of February.

The Philippines had its worst showing in the biennial meet with a paltry haul of 41 golds, 91 silvers and 56 bronze medals—a performance that came at the heels of its 2005 record-breaking haul of 113 golds, 84

Indonesian ace paces RP Ladies

By Marvyn B. Castillo

CAMIONA, CAVITE—PLAYING ON a still unopened meridian before entering pro, Caitlin Jessica Jayco of Indonesia swept closer to her goal after firing a four-under-par 68 yesterday for a two-stroke lead after 18 holes of the RP Ladies Invitational championship.

The tall and athletic 16-year-old turned the back nine of the wind-swept Legends layout of the Manila Southwoods Inter upside down to set the pace over local bet and former world junior champion Cyrie Nicdao and two and two other Filipinas by three.

A member of the Indonesian national team, Jayco drilled her birdies in her final nine holes for a 32 after a level 36 on the front.

Jayco, whose looking to take just two more titles as an amateur before turning pro later in the LPGA, even smelled a pro-length eagle try on the par-5 14th and flubbed was birdie putts from inside 10 feet in the next two as she slippery greens baffled the field.

Rodriguez, who won the 13-14-15 stanza of the world juniors in 2006, fired three birdies but three costly bogeys for a 70, which netted as the best RP score in the huge field limited by foreigners.

"There are still two rounds to go and anything can still happen," the dripper, a third year high school student at the David Leadbetter Academy in Florida, told the Inquirer.

"I'll get my sleep tonight, just play my game tomorrow (today) and try to be as many fairways and greens as possible and then see what happens."

Southeast Asian Games teammates Anya Tampinco and Chihiro Ikeda fired 71s to tie for third with veteran Lora Nebrida a stroke back.

Tampinco was the individual second placer behind a long-hitting Thai in the last Southeast Asian Games and is bidding to hold both the match play and stroke play titles after winning in Ilocos last year.

Defending champion Singapore Kimrungsun of Thailand shot herself in the foot and practically took herself out of the tournament after ballooning to a 79—any of the worst opening round score of a tournament champion in recent years.

Beverly Meadows of the Philippines, Nareeta Bang Ryung-yeon and Ang Hwa-lee and Betty Mak of Hong Kong, third placer to Debbie De Villa in 2006, stumbled 77s with Filipino-American Christina Canyon firing a 74.

Skipper de Guzman, the third member of the silver medal winning RP team in Thailand, fired a 77 along with Lucy Landeles, Institute Banquiel, Carmelette Mharonar, Ira Mitsuta and Ginger Mak of Hong Kong.

RODRIGUEZ: Anything can still happen in last two rounds.

No holiday break for Alvin's kids

IN HUDDLE

Keith Cortes

LAST CHRISTMAS was more busy than usual for the happiest family in Parañaque team manager Alvin Francisco.

The reason is for life—wife Dinah and daughters Christine and Cherie—some home from Valencia, Spain to spend a month here.

"Sobrang saya. The family was complete," said Alvin. Only his eldest son Angelo stays in Manila with him, having chosen theology over sports.

Angelo is one of the mainstays of the 6'0-UBA team.

* * *

While in Manila, Alvin said there was no vacation for his two girls, who are getting expert tennis training in Spain.

The girls brought home with them their Spanish coach Tomas Mecho to supervise their training in Manila.

"Today ang physical conditioning and practice sila dito, blindfolding one-stop. They spend more than six hours a day for tuesdays starting in the morning to late afternoon, taking a break only for lunch and a short rest," Alvin said.

The girls' physical conditioning program was supervised by Purefoods' Kirk Collier. The girls were under the American trainer for the entire duration of their month and a half stay here in Manila.

The Parañaque will be back in March to participate in a Mindanao-sponsored tennis competition.

Sixteen-year-old Christine will also do a pictorial for Cosmo jeans, which she is endorsing. She has previously posed for a billboard ad which is currently situated along Edsa.

* * *

I know Alvin didn't want to talk about the young Parañaque Christine brought home to meet daddy but I just had to ask:

Is it true that Alvin had once been flying bank home?

"Wala na 'yon sir, ayaw na po," was Alvin's simple answer. Alvin said he wants Christine to concentrate on training her sport.

Whipping very basic tools but ah-ha you guys know Christine didn't earn her strong seedings tournaments in the WTA, the ITF and the ITS, to name names.

I was surprised to learn that the two girls are getting their Spanish citizenship papers this year.

"Mahu pati ba si Cindi, nakakuha na sa," I

But Alvin and Angelo will keep their Filipino citizenship. "Siempre ho sa Filipinas ang kabuhayan."

* * *

Fellow columnist and broadcaster Bernie Vashkuhan wants hubby enough to catch Christine in action. The Parañaque ladies are flying back to Spain in a few days to resume their formal training in tennis.

Bernie, who followed Christine from a game in Mandaluyong to the Manila Zoo in Malate to get video footage, was very impressed with the teenager. He said he was not able to take shots of Cherie because she was injured.

The Bernie-to-video will be shown on Viva prime time this weekend.

* * *

How that Marco Sicapio has left for the United States, talks about "The girl in green" are dying down.

While it is true that everyone is curious to know who she is, hoping to the Atoc Duchess, who is close to the team, says "Dapat ba ipagsigawan sa buong bansa ito?"

"Nakaw-nakaw lang, dami girls na pa-may-sali-Manny and-ah, parasok ka pa-kasi? Then they post their pics in the Internet. Instant fame or even fortune?" she noted.

* * *

Sta. Lucia governor Buddy Encarnacion is still on cloud 9. He still can't believe that the Realtors have made it outright to the semifinal round of the ongoing conference, a first-ever feat for the ballclub.

Buddy said his objectives for the conference were very modest, and making the semis outright was farthest from his dreams.

"But now that we're here, we're gonna go all the way."

Equally enthralled are brothers Ken and Levi, sources of the Sta. Lucia franchise, who have been watching the games regularly.

During this scary tennis draft, Levi's choice was JCloud, while Buddy wanted Ryan Reyes. The two finally agreed to pick the latter.

New safety measures for Palaro

By Jane Navarro

THE ORGANIZERS OF THE 2007 PALARONG Pambansa in Puerto Princesa City, Palawan will have to come up with new preventionary measures to prevent a recurrence last year's accident where two officials died because of carbon fume.

Commissioner Eric Lorenzo of the Philippine Sports Commission said the safety and protection of athletes and officials in the Palaro will be among the major issues to be discussed when he meets with Department of Education officials.

"Of course, the safety of the entire Palaro delegation will be the paramount concern of the organizers," said Lorenzo, the PSC's representative to the school-based sports meet set on April 20-26.

The unfortunate summer heat in last year's edition in South Cotabato was blamed for the death of two officials during the week-long games run by the Department of Education.

Carlos Milanjar Del Prado, a 57-year-old principal of the Matutinao National High School, collapsed while attending the opening ceremonies before died of a heart attack.

Fellow coastal Edwin Galmatica, 48, of Koronadal City also succumbed to the strenght-sapping heat and died due to complications arising from hyperthermia.

The outdoor temperature during the tiu-nnaudal Palaro opening ceremony reportedly hovered at 36 degrees Celsius.

"The accidents could have been averted by putting up a couple of preventive measures," said Lorenzo.

Only 20 Olympic tickets for RP

By Marc Anthony Reyes

ONLY 20 TICKETS FOR THE OPENING and closing ceremony of the Beijing Olympics have been received for the Philippines.

Philippine Olympic Committee spokesman Joey Romasanta said yesterday that the number of tickets allotted for the country was based on the expected size of the RP delegation to the olympics.

"None we don't know who would get the tickets because they are not enough," Romasanta said.

Sports officials like POC president Peping Cojuangco, Romasanta added, need no tickets as they will be given accreditation as National Olympic Committee heads.

The organizers have also reserved tickets for at least two heads of state which could then be used in case President Macapagal-Arroyo and her husband Mike Arroyo decide to watch the Filipinos compete.

Media accreditations will also be scarce as only five slots for print media and sure photographer were allotted for the country.

The Philippines' TV carrier is Solar Sports, which snagged the rights from the International Olympic Committee.

The fact that China has so many people and that many journalists are expected to cover the event have forced organizers to limit the allocation of tickets, Romasanta said.

Internet reports said more than half of the reported seven million tickets will be sold to the locals while the rest will be allocated to the international audiences, sponsors, the IOC, SOCs and international sports federations.

According to the Beijing Games website, the ticket for the opening ceremony will cost 5,000 yuan or $641. The cost, according to the site, is lower compared with that of the Athens (2004) and Sydney (2000) Olympics based on the Chinese average income level.

The closing ceremony tickets range from 150-3,000 yuan ($19-$385), track and field competition preliminary tickets range from 30-380 yuan ($4-$39) and tickets to the finals from 80-1,000 yuan ($10-$128).

Tac sets youth shootfest May 30

PADILLA

TAKEN BY A WEEK AFTER his appointment, shooting association's national youth development program chair Nathaniel "Nat" Padilla has already scheduled the staging of the First Regional Youth Championships on May 30 to the PSC-PNSA range in Fort Bonifacio.

"We have to start as early as possible. I met my team members last week and quickly laid out a program that, hopefully would lead to the development of future world-class shooters," said the multi-titled Padilla, 35-time campaigner in the Southeast Asian Games and son of former Olympian Marciano "Tani" Ong.

The winners of the Regional Youth competition will advance to the National Youth Championships on Nov. 30-Dec. 2.

The 45-year-old Padilla, general manager of the family-owned Spring Cooking Oil, added that group will endorse recently clinics for aspiring shooters aged 12 to 17.

One of the priorities of Padilla is to tech partnership with local Government Unit (LGUs). "Our search for future shooting champion starts with the youth programs and we badly need the support of LGUs," stressed the reigning national pistol champion.

Padilla's group is also knocking at the door of private firms to garner the interest of the program.

Padilla are tapped by Philippine National Shooting Association president Art Ayl. S. Manigaod to head the youth development program.

Tapped by Padilla to help him implement the project were Tito Nilmar, vice chair for operations and marketing, Bobbie Bautista, vice chair for administration, national pistol coach Mateo Cinco and national rifle coach Rue Tejada.

Paragua keeps lead

Standings after seven rounds

Round 8

Eljanov (Ukraine) 6½ - **M. Gurevich (Turkey) 4½**; **Ivanchuk (Ukraine) 5½ - Ni Hua (China) 5**; **Wang Yue (China) 5½ - Bu Xiangzhi (China) 5**; **Grischuk (Russia) 5½ - Karjakin (Ukraine) 5**; **Paragua (RP) 5½ - Ding Liren (China) 5**; **Kasimdzhanov (Uzbekistan) 5 - Nisipeanu (Romania) 5**; **Bacrot (France) 5 - Onischuk (Ukraine) 5**; **Svidler (Russia) 5 - Wang Hao (China) 5**; **Rublevsky (Russia) 5 - Vallejo Pons (Spain) 5**

Round 9

Karjakin - **M. Gurevich (Turkey) 6½**; **Ding Liren (China) 6 - Eljanov (Ukraine) 6**; **Ni Hua (China) 6 - Wang Yue (China) 6**; **Bu Xiangzhi (China) 6 - Ivanchuk (Ukraine) 6**; **Nisipeanu (Romania) 6 - Grischuk (Russia) 6**; **Onischuk (Ukraine) 6 - Kasimdzhanov (Uzbekistan) 6**; **Wang Hao (China) 6 - Bacrot (France) 6**; **Vallejo Pons (Spain) 6 - Svidler (Russia) 6**; **Rublevsky (Russia) 6 - Paragua (RP) 6**

Round 10

Eljanov - **Ivanchuk (Ukraine) 6½**; **Ni Hua (China) 6½ - Wang Yue (China) 6½**; **Grischuk (Russia) 6½ - Karjakin (Ukraine) 6**; **Paragua (RP) 6½ - Ding Liren (China) 6**; **Kasimdzhanov (Uzbekistan) 6 - Nisipeanu (Romania) 6**; **Bacrot (France) 6 - Onischuk (Ukraine) 6**; **Svidler (Russia) 6 - Wang Hao (China) 6**; **Rublevsky (Russia) 6 - Vallejo Pons (Spain) 6**; **M. Gurevich (Turkey) 6 - Bu Xiangzhi (China) 6**

GRANDMASTER MARC PAUL Paragua led three Filipinos in contention after seven rounds of the inaugural ASEAN Masters Chess Circuit in Tarakan, Indonesia.

Paragua drew with countryman National Master Rolando Nadjo to keep the lead with 6½ points, even as International Master Jayson Gonzales downed Malaysian Fide Master Tan Sheng Mok to gain ground with 5.5 points.

Gonzales, battling for his third and final GM result, prevailed at ply 42 moves of the French defense to pull ahead of Mok, who posted 5.0 points in men's Group B (category 7).

Gonzales, coach of multi-titled Ms. National Master Catherine Perena, needs at least eight points in 11 rounds to become the country's ninth GM.

GM Wesley So also continued his climb in Group A (category 9) division by beating compatriot NM Rodel Naduva and tallying 6.5 points.

GM Cheng Zhong of Singapore leads with 6.5 points. Michiko Bermudez, Contributor

CELEBRITY COACH: Mixed-coach Norman Black rides the Tsuba Mini Bull of branch at Dacia Resa Carpark in Makati City Black, shown with a Tsuba Mini staff, earned the Arroyo Blue Eagles the title of the Champions Challenge Cup last year. Black is also great-uncle coach of the PBA in the '80s.

TRO stops chess polls

THERE WILL BE NO ELECTION OF officers of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines scheduled on Jan. 19 in Tagaytay City.

The Regional Trial Court Branch 90 of Quezon City issued a Temporary Restraining Order yesterday calling for the group headed by NCFP president Prospero Pichay Jr. to come and desist from conducting the elections slated at the Tagaytay Convention Center.

Judge Reynaldo Daroy signed the TRO based on a petition filed by incumbent NCFP group headed by lawyer Jose Eduardo Reyes.

Jose Eduardo Reyes.

The petitioners, who also include NCFP board chair Rep. Marian Dellosa, Go Teng Kok, Jesus Torre, Reginald Alfonso Carillo, Dr. Jessie Munoz, Raul Mendoza, and Eduardo Mendoza, want the election to be held on Feb. 2 at the Aristocrats Sports Complex in Quezon City. With a report from Jayson Ty and Ando Arida

NBA STANDINGS

	W	L	PCT	GB
Atlantic Division				
Boston	33	6	.846	—
Toronto	27	14	.659	7.0
New Jersey	20	19	.513	12.5
Philadelphia	16	23	.410	16.5
New York	10	29	.256	22.5
Central Division				
Detroit	29	10	.744	—
Cleveland	28	14	.636	3.5
Indiana	21	18	.538	8.0
Milwaukee	19	21	.475	10.5
Chicago	14	26	.350	15.5
Southeast Division				
Orlando	33	10	.767	—
Washington	19	21	.475	13.5
Atlanta	17	23	.425	15.5
Charlotte	14	25	.359	17.5
Miami	12	27	.308	19.5
WESTERN CONFERENCE				
Northwest Division				
San Antonio	29	11	.725	—
Dallas	28	13	.683	—
New Orleans	25	15	.625	3.0
Houston	20	18	.526	6.5
Memphis	9	28	.243	16.5
Northwest Division				
Portland	27	14	.659	—
Denver	25	15	.625	1.5
Utah	23	17	.575	3.5
Seattle	9	30	.231	16.5
Minnesota	9	32	.220	18.0
Pacific Division				
LA Lakers	30	11	.732	—
Phoenix	30	12	.714	0.5
Golden State	25	15	.625	4.5
Sacramento	19	21	.475	10.5
LA Clippers	12	30	.286	18.5

EARLY TODAY'S GAMES

Washington at CLEVELAND, 7:30 p.m.
Boston at ATLANTA, 7:30 p.m.
Chicago at MILWAUKEE, 8:30 p.m.
Orlando at DETROIT, 7:30 p.m.
Toronto at MEMPHIS, 8:30 p.m.
Indiana at HOUSTON, 8:30 p.m.
Minnesota at PHOENIX, 9:30 p.m.
Seattle at GOLDEN STATE, 10:30 p.m.

NBA on ESPN

THE CLEVELAND CAVALIERS TAKE ON the San Antonio Spurs at the Alamodome in San Antonio, Texas. ESPN will air the game tonight at 9:30 p.m. with a replay at 9:00 p.m.

James scores 51 as Cavs cage Grizzlies; Hawks up

ATLANTA—THE ATLANTA HAWKS BUILT A 25-POINT SECOND HALF LEAD and held off the short-handed former Nuggets to record a 104-93 home victory on Tuesday, with Joe Johnson scoring 22 points.

The Nuggets played the game a day after terminally Mike underwent surgery to remove a testicular tumor and were without Earnest Marbin, who was suffering from a staphylococcus infection.

Marvin Williams scored 19 points and Josh Childress 17 as the Hawks got back to the .500 mark at 17-17.

"We came out on fire again tonight," Hawks coach Mike Woodson told reporters.

"We had a great first half, a total team effort across the board. I thought our defensive coverages were right on for every opponent we saw."

Carmelo Anthony scored 36 points and had 12 rebounds and Allen Iverson scored 27 points in leading the Nuggets, who were 25 points down in the third quarter.

They got as close as eight points down with 1:30 to play but could get no closer.

"Carmelo and Al (Iverson) still had big games," Woodson said. "But those are guys you're not going to stop. You have to slow them down, and try to cut off some of the supporting cast."

Iverson and Johnson each 29. Small forward both ejected from the game with 38.9 seconds remaining when Iverson objected to a call and was sent off.

Smith then continued the argument and tossed his jersey and headband into the crowd as he left.

"Those calls mattered. It was the end of the game," said Iverson.

In Memphis, Tennessee, LeBron James scored a season-high 51 points, including 29 in the fourth quarter and overtime, to lead Cleveland to a 132-124 victory over Memphis in the 90s on Tuesday.

James made 16-of-28 shots and also had nine assists and eight rebounds as the Cavaliers handed the Grizzlies their fifth straight loss. James' career-high is 58 points against Toronto in March 2005.

The teams were tied at 113 at the end of regulation, as James missed an attempted game-winner from 30 feet as time expired.

Cleveland shot 53 percent on winning its eighth game in the last 12.

In New York, the home side won successive games for only the third time this season by downing Washington, 109-93.

In suburban Hills, Michigan, Detroit bounced back from an embarrassing loss by whipping Toronto, 103-85.

In Orlando, Florida, Rasheed Lewis scored 26 points to help the Magic oust the Orange Pods, 102-88.

In Houston, Philadelphia rallied from 26 points down to turn back the Rockets, 111-107.

In Minneapolis, Shaun Davis had 22 points, nine assists and a season-high five steals to lead Golden State past Minnesota, 105-99.

In Los Angeles, the Clippers knocked Phoenix out of first place in the Western Conference after hammering out a 97-90 victory over the Suns.

The Suns slipped half a game behind the Lakers atop the Pacific Division.

— Reuters, AP

DRIBBLING New York Knicks guard Marc Robinson (right) cuts up at the arm to pass off the Washington Wizards' Brendan Haywood (left).

— AP

'Old-timers' Trinidad, Jones set comeback clash

NEW YORK—FELIX TRINIDAD AND Roy Jones Jr. will be fighting more than just each other on Saturday night at Madison Square Garden.

They'll also be fighting perceptions that both are five years past their primes.

Jones, considered the best fighter in the boxing for the better part of a decade, turned 39 this week. He showed up to a news conference on Tuesday with a beard that made him appear much older. Trinidad, 36 promised to shave it off when he makes weight of 77 kilos (170 pounds).

He's fought just twice since losing an unanimous decision to Antonio Tarver in 2003, both lackluster duels from against lesser opponents. He fought only six bouts after the 12-round bout represents one last step before a potential super-middleweight title bout—a road block to a possible world title.

"A lot of them think I can't get it anymore," said Jones, wearing glasses as a fall-out. "I'll with because of his poor performances, including him becoming the first former middleweight champ to claim a heavyweight title in more than 100 years.

"This is a chance to show them I still got it."

FELIX Trinidad (left) and Roy Jones Jr. pose before they faced off in the presence of promoter Don King during their fight's press conference.

— AP

Trinidad, meanwhile, says Jones' out of retirement offer promoter Don King flew to his native Puerto Rico and promised him a front-row seat. The five-time world champion has fought here twice since 2002, beating Ricardo Mayorga before outlasting a punishing 12-round loss to Ronald "Winky" Wright in May 2006.

Backed by an entourage 21 strong, Trinidad (42-3, 35 knockouts) definitely said their nothing would slow him down—not the long layoff, fighting at a weight 4.5 kilos (10 pounds) heavier than ever before, or the high expectations that the Long Island native can beat Jones in New York City almost certainly will keep upon his shoulders.

"I'm feeling very good with a lot of passion," Trinidad said through a translator. "I trained and worked very hard to win, and this weekend we're really going to be victorious."

If nothing else, the two fighters are willing to entertain.

Trinidad has been training for the past six months in Puerto Rico, slowly putting weight on his slender frame while trying to retain the quick, heavy hands that have yielded a stunning 90-percent career knockout rate.

Arthur and trainer Hasan Trinidad said Tito is in "one of the best conditions of his life."

Then, turning to Jones and cracking his voice up a notch, the father added, "You are going to fight against the best Tito Trinidad that anybody has ever fought against."

Jones' preparations from his native, left his home in Florida for a small, secluded training camp in the Southeastern United States with longtime trainer Alton Hendersons. Slowly he shrinked his body down to fighting weight, and hosted a ripped six-pack Tuesday.

"I feel extremely the only person I'm going to be facing is Tito. I really have to I can't beat the dad, too," Jones said, smiling broadly to a few from the opposing camp. "I can't even begin to tell you all how true I'm going to be on Saturday night."

— AP

RP Hall of Fame launched

By Jane Navarro

THE PHILIPPINE SPORTS COMMISSION will spearhead soon the construction of a sports museum that would finally pave the way for the enshrine of a Philippine Sports Hall of Fame.

PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez yesterday announced the launching of the multi-year project after a meeting with top sports officials who will be the groundbreak for the celebration process for the Hall of Fame.

Under Republic Act 9757, Ramirez said the PSC is mandated to establish a Philippine Sports Hall of Fame designed to preserve and honor the country's sports heritage. The Hall of Fame will enshrine Filipino athletes, coaches and trainers who made the country proud in their respective disciplines.

The PSC chief said his group will take from the governing body of the Hall of Fame and advisory council, apart from the creation of a screening committee and secretariat.

Members said the selection process will involve the nomination of athletes, coaches and trainers to the Hall of Fame. The deadline for submission of nomination is set on May 30, while the screening ceremony will be held at the end of the year.

The sports museum will be built on the second floor of the Philippine National Bank building in front of the Harrison Plaza. Ramirez added that the target date for the ground launch of the museum is on April 23.

"If we speak officials who attended the meeting were POC first vice president and Rep. Monico Puentevella, PSC commissioner Jose Mendoza and the executive and PSC executive director Norme Ko.

Meeting chief Ace Magsaysay, the president of the Philippine Olympian Association, and Noli Manaog of the Games and Amusements Board also attended the meeting.

Teams fill Mango Tee slots; prizes near ₱5M

WITH 320 TEAMS FILLING EVERY available slot as early as two months in advance of the event, the Mango Tee Invitational Golf Tournament at Manila Southwoods Golf Club in Cavite will be held on the Mahong Country Club inside the posh Ayala Alabang village steps up preparations for its popular annual amateur golf tournament.

An outpouring of sponsors led by co-promoters Filipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and Bernat Salcedo is giving Mango Tee organizers the leeway to boost the prize package, which is now expected to hit close to ₱5 million in value.

Bona Sonnel-Arce, Filipinas's vice Orion Villanueva and golfs from The Turf Company Orion Engler, Jose Pilato Dimaisip and Club Cor make up the foursome of hole-in-one winners in the tournament scheduled on Feb. 9-10.

Major sponsors are Mikati Holding Ledesco, Philippine Airlines and Fuji-Xerox.

Chinatrust and Toyota are the premier sponsors while the premium hole sponsors are Coca Cola, Golf Gear, JP Granfolio, Republic Group, Asics, Bacardi, Bank/Elanet Club, BIG Brick, Strudcon and Fundamental Ice Cube Bank.

The members of the 24th annual Mango Tee committee are:

Overall chair—Gardenia P. Salcedo; **Golden chair**—Isidro L. Ponce Enrile; **Members**—Noemi L. Lerma, Florencio L. Abcede, Raul C. Concio, Jr., Ruy Jose T. Puno, Isabel S. Sison, Rachel Socorro Salcedo, Antonio S. Abola, Jr., Rolando S. Bautista, Emmanuel P. Tiongco, Elena T. Ayala, Alexis T. Lim, Justin M. Ahern, Eric C. Zita Gow, Hwang S. Palmares, Eric S. Ventura, Bernard B. Jacinto, Jose T. Magsaysay, Jr.

SPORTSWATCH

US cockers join SJC Derby

FIVE MORE AMERICAN COCKERS, WHO ARRIVED Tuesday night, have signed up in the 2008 SJC International Derby on Jan. 21, 22, 26 and 27 at San Juan Coliseum. Set for a go-for battle against Filipino entrants are Jaycee Campbell and Charley Malone of Ohio, Joseph Rocchio of Louisiana, John Barbee from Hawaii and Jerry Adkins of Alabama. Earlier, defending champions Patricia Antonio, Joe Sanford of California and Keiko Taniguchi of Japan submitted their entries along with Bryan Cochran of Alabama. Rookie hotte and Brenda Morita of Japan and 14-American Joni Mensinger of Saipan. Call 7201000 and 7204000.

Las Piñas 3-cocker today

A TOTAL OF 96 FIGHTS IN 32 TAP-TAP-THE 3-COCK derby tonight at Las Piñas Coliseum, with P900,000 in prizes going to the winners. Head RC Sabanan, who pegged the entry fee at P5,500 only, reminded spectators to submit entries today until 2 p.m. only then Thursday, Jan. 24, the showdown of more than 40 big-time cockers takes place in the Schoolgirl A Cases 4-cock derby. Mayor Teresa Aguilar and assistant daughter Bustin Aguilar will spearhead the fund-raising effort for the benefit of Las Piñas City Hotel and Breast Cancer Foundation Philippines, Inc. Call 8727-0601 and 0920-5135276.

THE RACE IS ON: Puerto Princesa City Mayor Edward Hagedorn accepts the booking of the 2008 FIM Motocross Asian Motocross Championships Round 1 from Marky Cerquiet, FIM Asian Motocross Commission president. The opening leg kicks off Feb. 24 with 18 countries participating. For details, check out www.asiamx.org. The National Motocross Series on Feb. 3 will serve as a tune-up for the Filipinos. Event backers are City of Puerto Princesa, PSC, Globe, Bridgestone, motocrosspublishers.com and Inside Racing.

SPORTS

Sharapova ousts 'mom'

Williams, Henin, Nadal advance to next round

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—FIFTH-RANKED MARIA SHARAPOVA put an end to new mom Lindsay Davenport's strong comeback, taking a 6-1, 6-3 victory Wednesday to reach the Australian Open third round.

The eagerly awaited match pitted Davenport, who won 20-1 with three titles since returning to the tour, against a former Grand Slam winner for the first time since the took maternity leave to give birth to son Jagger last June.

"From the day I found out, I started working for this game," Davenport said of the short "Up preached it like it's a final."

Locked in and sharp from the start, Sharapova yielded only six points to the first five games, keeping Davenport constantly on the run. Nothing much was going right for Davenport, who saw her serves come back for winners and passing shots zip past when she ventured to the net.

The crowd, which had started roughly divided in their support of the two players, with a sprinkling of American flags scattered around packed Rod Laver Arena, largely shifted to underdog Davenport and cheered loudly when the fleetfoot held for her first game to push realism 5-1.

"I think I could've given them a little more to cheer for," Davenport said. "Obviously I wanted to play a little better than I did in the beginning, but she's naturally aggressive on me.

"She was head and shoulders better than I was. I felt like I never really hit the ball that well, and I'm in trouble when I'm not hitting the ball well."

Sharapova held to finish off the set in 26 minutes with a crisp forehand cross-court winner.

In the second set, Davenport traded places with Dokic of the skills that earned her to three Grand Slam titles and the No. 1 ranking. She broke off eight-hour point while serving at 3-3 before Sharapova cashed a fourth with a sharply angled backhand service return winner.

Sharapova, who never gave up more than two points in her eight service games, held, then broke Davenport for the fifth time when the Russian served a forehand on Sharapova's second match point.

Obviously I'm disappointed with the way the match went and the tournament went, but I have to look big picture at this point in my career. And so far it's been pretty well the last few months," Davenport said. "I still feel like I'm the hardest girl to the world."

Sharapova, who lost last year's final to Serena Williams, finished with 20 winners to just 12 unforced errors.

Williams and top-ranked Justine Henin-Hardenne scored straight-set victories, but worse'Lisa easy as the scores indicated to earn a step closer to a possible semifinal showdown.

Williams rose the aggressor in a 6-3, 6-1 win over Elena Vesnina, hitting as hard as rarely every shot that she seemed to be trying to reduce the ball to bits of fluff.

"My game was definitely a good game to play, tomorrow like her," said Williams, who prefers to match her power against anyone else's. "I really enjoy the battle."

Pushing her Melbourne Park record to 35-1 since 2005, Williams ran off the last four games, breaking Vesnina with a backhand cross-court passing shot on match point that the Chinese player let drop, only to see it dip the line.

Henin looked to be on her way to an easy victory over Russia's Olga Puchkileva, sailing through the first set in 22 minutes while commanding just five unforced errors.

But back hitting from three to begin picking on her point, and Henin appeared to be bothered by the gusty winds that made every serve toss an adventure, complicated as one side by a bright rainbow sun.

Henin had five double-faults in her first two service games of the second set, contributing to nine break points for Puchkileva. Henin had 20 unforced errors to nine winners in the set, but was clearly happy to have survived.

"I played a very good first set, then I lost some intensity," said Henin.

On the men's side, second-seeded Rafael Nadal breezed to a 6-0, 6-2, 6-2 win over Frenchman Florent Serra.

Unseeded Mardy Fish, meanwhile, earned the 32 Tommy Robredo. AP

PHOTO: Sharapova lifts a service as the way to fulfilling her list of comeback mom Lindsay Davenport in the Australian Open.

Tacuyan, Fiel make RP squad

By Dennis U. Eros
Inquirer Libre

THREE BATTLE SCARRED BOXERS AND two young cards will try to punch their way to Olympic berths in the First Asian Olympic Boxing qualifying duel from Jan. 20 to Feb. 3 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Bike Asian Games gold medalist Violito Peña and bantamweight Jose Tipon and Efrodio Jocjohnel Jones Comon killer Gerardo Bandoy bumper the five-man team as the week-long duglist where only the silver and gold medalists in each class will earn Olympic tickets.

Peña, a flyweight, and lightweight Gerardo Bandoy seem to outlast a trio of passing Olympic berths during the 2004 World Championships and November in Chicago. Bikol bet Tipon never made it past the first round in he got defeated by Thai Worapoj Petchkoon.

The spotlight, however, will fall on featherweight Orlando Tacuyan Jr. and light welterweight Adian Rigonan Fiel, who trained the rest of Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines-president Manny T. Lopez and his coaching staff headed by Boots Gozo.

Tacuyan, the reigning Seoul Polytech Open titleholder made it over Charly Suarez and Bobby Balcolet, respectively, beaten and finished first in the first round of the Manila.

"He's young, brave and talented," said Lopez of Fiel, a member of the Northern Cobra Athletes Alliance which reigned the 40-Smart PLDT team to a herself last November in San Francisco, California.

Fiel's father hails from Cebu, while his mother is a Muslim.

Gozo, who will cut Olympian Ronald Chavez will handle the Smart-PLDT boxing team in the qualifying, said the selection was the product of a series of tests among the contenders. Gozo said this included sparring with each other regardless of their different weight classes.

The ring had planned to send six boxers to the qualifying but decided to drop welterweight Willie Lopez to see the list. Lopez won a Bay during the Manila and the 29th SEA Games in Thailand.

They speak softly and carry a big stick

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE PAY THEY WERE HUSTLED and rarefied on the ice rink, you'd never expect lithe, willowy ladies to emerge from under the thick and heavy ice hockey apparel.

"People are actually surprised that soccer we're tough," said wing defender Yas Liz Santiago of the Manila Ice Vixens. "Maybe because often only everyone's putting on makeup and wearing skirts."

But the Ice Vixens, the only women's ice hockey club team in the country, wear strong despite how beautiful the game.

"In other countries, most of the women hockey players are beautiful, but here they're surprised that everyone's girly," said forward Jhenna Benedicto.

"People always think we're figure skaters," noted Shania Miguel, who at 16 is also the youngest player on the team.

It is a misconception other women gets dreadful, too.

"Sometimes they get undercut, matron, 'alternate captain Aurora de los Reyes added. "One time we had a tournament, and people were like 'Oh, figure skaters.' But we played hard and won even. The score was like 5-0. We beat all players."

Although most of the Vixens did start with figure skating, the strength and stamina they developed from training in ice training made them more equipped to play hockey.

"If you're not really good at skating, it will be hard for you to keep on moving back and forth," said Santiago. "It's like playing basketball but with ice skates on. It's really difficult to maneuver."

Difficult, but inspiring, too.

"You really need guts to play," noted Benedicto. "If you're afraid to get hurt, still, it will be hard for you to learn ice hockey. You have to be tough, because everyone else will be tough on you."

Even if the sport seems to involve more body-bumping than strategy, the Vixens said it doesn't quick feet must come with a quick mind.

"It's about endurance and mind power," said de los Reyes. "You also have to think when to pass or shoot."

While other women's club teams have folded for various reasons, the Vixens have managed to keep their team together since 2001.

"We've always been together—that's the reason we're all here in the first place," said Santiago.

In fact, some team members started out as soccer stars but were told they were too small to play soccer in college.

"They said we were 'short' stars," the 26-year-old Cortez, who only learned how to skate after college.

"I just passed by the skating rink one summer and I thought I might try it. When I started training, it was very hard. At the start, I thought of quitting, but you really have to be determined."

The Vixens' current 18 players range in age from 16 to 40 years old, with a majority of the players in their 20s.

Aside from women's club teams, the Vixens have also competed in boys' leagues, against players as young as 12 years old.

Daniel Dominguez Que is 30 years old. Miguel—at 16 years old—is the youngest on the team.

"You're not supposed to be afraid to say it out of what you see," said Benedicto. "You just have to practice."

The Vixens assured, too, that it's all right if you could have fun.

"I still get scared," said Cortez. "I definitely get hit by a stick during the competitions, but you just continue."

Financial troubles, however, is necessary for a sport still growing in the country, aside from buying their own gear, the Vixens also shell out their own money just to compete in club competitions in Japan, Macau, Hong Kong and Malaysia, where they placed third in a 2006 Asian tournament.

"We want to build a solid foundation for women's ice hockey," said Santiago.

"I think we're doing good [at competitions]. It's a sport," noted Miguel. "We don't even have [our own] love. But there's the excitement, we enjoy it a lot."

UNITED for their love of the game are (top photo from row, from left) Sharin Miguel, Christa Ruiz, Anne Reis, Adrian Ty and Bianca de los Reyes; (standing, from left) Ana Liz Santiago, Ate Tarrobo, Daniel Dominguez Que, Jhenna Benedicto and captain Loraine Cortez. At right, the ladies show off their form.

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BASA KA NG SWERTE MO!
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BOP surplus hits all-time high of $8.6B

'07 record boosted by OFW remittances, 'hot money'

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINES ENDED 2007 with a record balance-of-payments surplus of $8.6 billion on strong remittance and foreign investment inflows, outperforming the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' goal for the period.

For the month of December alone, the BOP reversed to a surplus of $784 million from a deficit of $67 million in November as Christmas-related remittances offset the net outflows of foreign portfolio or "hot money" invested in local stocks, bonds and bank products.

The full-year BOP surplus was more than double the $3.77 billion windfall posted in 2006 while the monthly surplus exceeded the $631 million in December a year ago.

For 2007, the BSP was expecting an overall payments surplus of only $0.882 billion. The full-year target was upgraded several times last year to mirror the swelling of foreign reserves owing to the BSP's heavy purchases of dollars from the spot foreign exchange market.

"The $8.6 billion BOP surplus was achieved as a result of the surging remittances from overseas Filipino workers, net inflows of foreign direct and portfolio investments and investment income of the BSP as well as steady stream of export earnings," BSP Governor Amando M. Tetangco Jr. said in a statement.

Gross international reserves (GIR) of the BSP rose to $33.7 billion as of end-December last year, equivalent to 7.1 months' worth of imports of goods and payments of services and income.

The GIR is also 4.5 times the country's short-term external debt based on original maturity and 3.5 times based on residual maturity.

Tetangco said the BSP would continue to build up the country's international reserves to provide a buffer against external shocks.

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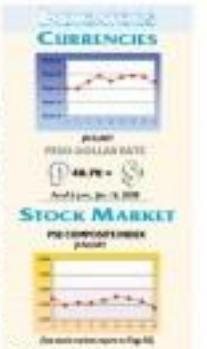
Landbank is also in charge of the government's plan to offer multicurrency retail treasury bonds, considered the revenue-raising component of the government's borrowing program.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, which has long advocated the OFW bond offering, believes the government can raise $500 million to $1 billion a year in support of infrastructure financing while lowering the investment yields of the BOP assets. (With C. Dumlao)



Stocks down 2.8% on US recession fears

BANK PRICES CLOSED LOWER MOST yesterday on heightened fears the United States could sink into recession, dealers said.

Weaker-than-expected US retail sales in December and uncertainties for Citigroup further unsettled global markets, they said.

The composite index shed 85.02 points to 3,285.88.

That was its weakest finish since Sept. 1 (Until plus when it closed at 3,188.73.)

The broader all-share index fell 56.57

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High-yield deposit scheme for OFWs set

THE STATE-OWNED LAND BANK OF THE Philippines will offer high-yielding deposit instruments for overseas Filipino workers to help them reap with the shrinking peso equivalent of their offshore earnings.

In an interview, Landbank president Ed da Fiva said that as part of the government's strategy to ease the adverse impact of the sharp peso appreciation on OFWs, the bank would offer a new instrument in the form of peso-denominated, long-term negotiable certificates of deposits (CDs).

Landbank earlier begged the government's mandate to spearhead the offering of investment instruments for OFWs, including the OFW bonds. Development Bank of the Philippines and British bank HSBC will also take part in the initiative to help OFWs.

"The initiatives will be launched by (President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo) in Dubai at the end of this month," Fiva said.

He said the new instrument would be offered onshore, but marketing would be conducted here and abroad.

By using the LTNCD structure, Fiva said Landbank could offer better yields to OFWs. Since these instruments would carry a term of more than five years, she said investors could likewise enjoy tax exemption.

Asked how much LTNCDs Landbank would like to offer, Fiva said it would depend on market demand.

Unlike regular time deposits, LTNCDs are slapped with lower reserve requirements, thus enabling issuing banks to offer higher yields. Another major difference is that investors are required to hold the security until maturity, unlike time deposits where premature withdrawal is allowed.

Landbank is also in charge of the government's plan to offer multicurrency retail treasury bonds, considered the revenue-raising component of the government's borrowing program.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, which has long advocated the OFW bond offering, believes the government can raise $500 million to $1 billion a year in support of infrastructure financing while lowering the investment yields of the BOP assets. (With C. Dumlao)

ePerformax seen raising P3.3B from IPO in March

By Elizabeth Sarabia-Lanuza

CONTACT CENTER FIRM EPERformax International Inc. is targeting to hold its proposed initial public offering in March to generate up to P3.3 billion in fresh funds for the company.

ePerformax global manager Carlo Severino said yesterday that the company was also on track with its expected growth in earnings this year and the previous year despite the weakness in the dollar, which is the currency for most call center revenues.

Severino said the company is expecting its income to double in 2008. Profits last year were estimated to have grown by 70-80 percent due to new outsourcing businesses from clients that have transferred their requirements from India to the Philippines.

Firm unfazed by fears of US recession

Despite the expected US economic slowdown this year, Severino said he remained bullish on the industry since American companies still found it more expensive to conduct certain operations in their home country, driving those firms to outsource certain corporate functions or requirements to countries like the Philippines.

"The cost gap is still huge so we still see more US companies outsourcing to the Philippines," Severino said.

In line with the company's bullish sentiment, ePerformax expects to double its contact center seats in the next two years from the current 2,000 seats. It operates in Makati and Cebu City.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) earlier approved the planned IPO of ePerformax consisting of upto 233 million shares at a maximum price of P15 each. Of the total offer size, 153 million shares will comprise the primary issue while 80 million shares will make up the secondary issue.

The company or its shareholders also have an option to issue an additional 22 million shares as over-allotment.

The company has tapped BDO Capital and Investment Corp. as its lone manager and lead underwriter.

Forward ... march!

SOME LUCKY GANGSTERS WHO contact the contributor in Northern Mindanao must be cheering their vocal chords hoarse by now.

These traders will continue to make a killing from corn trading in the area—at the expense of the poor farmers, of course.

Based on news reports, thirty (30) corn-laid in San Augustin, Butuan City and Cabadbaran City, Agusan del Norte, with a total capacity of 180,000 metric tons (MT) of corn.

The facilities are expected to be completed by the end of the first quarter of 2008.

Cargill Philippines Inc. is also constructing a corn processing plant in Mindanao.

Cargill's plant is expected to be completed by the end of 2008 and will have a capacity of 300,000 MT of corn

Metrobank sells ₱4.63B in bad loans to Orix

Memo to CA: Please confirm Gary Teves

BY OUR SERBERAN STYLE OF democracy, power is shared among the executive, legislative departments and the judiciary.

The President runs the executive department with the help of the Cabinet.

The legislative department is broken up into the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Supreme Court rules the judicial system.

Most power is shared when the President's choices for the Cabinet, among others, have to be confirmed by the Commission of Appointments (CA).

The CA consists of the President of the Senate (who votes only to break a tie), 12 senators and 12 representatives elected by each House on the basis of proportional representation from the political parties and party-list organizations.

The CA is required to act on all appointments submitted to it within 30 days. Finally, the CA rules by a majority vote of all the members.

If the CA does not confirm an appointee, his term expires. So, the President reappoints him. The CA rejects him for the second time. The President appoints him again. This version hardly has been going on for years. It is no longer funny to watch.

Now, a senator, whose name will not spoil this column, has pointed out a loophole in the law sufficient on appointee, he is out for the rest of his life. It occurs to me that if the President reserves the appointment for the second time, he should be not entitled to consideration confirmed.

The CA's responsibility is to determine whether the appointee is up to the job. If so, it cannot understand why Finance Secretary Margarito Teves has been turned down not once, but twice.

Scholastically, Teves is wellqualified. He has a Ph.D. in economics from Oxford. His work experience is extensive. He is executive director of Ayala Foundation (where I first met him) and, more conspicuously, chair of Landbank. He has been able to shuffle government finances like an expert card shark.

The investment industry is under the wings of Teves. The industry has nothing but praises for Teves.

His disarming job has wrought havoc on his golf game. This is his supreme sacrifice.

If the Commission was by party lines, Teves should be confirmed. The administration should be able to hamess a simple majority vote.

But, when you put 25 politicians of all colors and stripes in one powerful committee, you never know what hand ball they will be playing.

Smoking Teves as I do, he is not likely to play the game, even at the risk of losing unconfirmed.

I am not saying that Teves is indispensable. But the country needs him.

By Doris C. Dumlao

METROPOLITAN BANK AND TRUST CO., the country's largest bank, has sold ₱4.63 billion worth of bad loans to Japanese financial services group Orix Corp. using the Special Purpose Vehicle framework.

The bought is ₱6.81 billion the total value of bad assets that Metrobank sold last year.

While the latest sale, Metrobank is expected to close its 2007 books with a non-performing loan ratio of 0.8 percent versus 1.1 percent the previous year.

Metrobank's NPL ratio will also come in below the industry average of 5.26 percent based on the end-October data of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

In addition to the bulk sale of bad loans to Orix, Metrobank sold ₱4.36 billion in foreclosed properties last year, over 235 percent higher than the value of real and other property sales sold in 2006.

The bank surrender announced the successful auction of ₱4.63 billion worth of nonperforming loans to Orix following an auction conducted in December.

The NPL ratio, which comprised over 300 accounts, was completed in favor of Orix Glucksan Street ISPV-MKG Inc., an SPV wholly-owned by the Orix group of Japan.

The SPV Law gives fiscal incentives to wholesale asset transfers, aiming to encourage banks to clean up their books and free up more funds for lending.

"The law exempts a certain transaction from the documentary stamp, capital gains and expanded value-added tax while reducing the registration transfer fees by half."

"We continue to look for opportunities to strengthen our balance sheet," said Cesar Lagera, Metrobank senior vice president for specialized asset management group.

"There are part of Metrobank's initiatives to improve its overall profitability. We are not actively pursuing loans in future deals and [are] are exploring other ways of disposing nonperforming loans and assets," he added.

The Metrobank group earlier reported a 19.7 percent year-on-year increase in consolidated net income to ₱5.31 billion for the first nine months of 2007, while consolidated total assets stood at ₱977.64 billion as of end-September.

Alliance Tuna bullish on export prospects

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lacson

CANNED TUNA EXPORTER AL-LIANCE Tuna International Inc. is optimistic that its export revenues grow 30 percent next year and will increase by another 20 percent this year.

Company president Jonathan Gee said in an interview that Alliance Tuna management expects to continue with strong currencies like the European Community to offset the adverse effects of the weak dollar.

Gee also said that despite the dwindling supply of tuna, which caused prices to climb to their highest in 30 years, Alliance Tuna was able to increase its production of processed fish last year by 22 percent.

Gee said Alliance Tuna currently sells to 47 countries and operates a regional hub in seven each in the Middle East and Eastern Europe.

To finance expansion plans, Alliance Tuna said it might consider borrowing or selling additional shares "at the right time."

Alliance Tuna's net sales for the nine months ending Sept. 30 last year grew 53 percent to ₱13.1 million from ₱13.5 million in the same period in 2006.

Alliance Tuna shipped a total of 729 full container loads (FCLs) of canned tuna products for the period, 71 FCLs more than the previous year's volume of 658 FCLs.

The strong sales growth was attributed to the surge in orders from all the major markets, a wider client base and introduction of new products.

Export sales to the North American market comprised 21 percent of export revenues while sales to the European market accounted for 64 percent.

BOP surplus hits all-time high ...

from page B1

BSP Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. said.

The record high BOP surplus also reflected optimism on the country following the weakness in domestic economic growth. It is but natural that investors abandon the cheap drawdown in inflation and the improvement in the government's fiscal position. Several large initial and follow-on public offerings in the stock market also attracted foreign money.

On the other hand, the recent moderate BOP surplus in December, as compared to

billion dollar surpluses in other months in 2007, was due to the net foreign portfolio outflows during the period.

The December portfolio outflows were attributed, by numbers to some investors' strategy of locking in gains after a bullish year for equities that brought the Philippine Stock Exchange to record highs in 2007. Still, the country yielded $1.3 billion in net portfolio inflows for the whole of 2007, 35 percent higher than a year ago.

Stocks ...

from page B1

points to 2,204.09.

Decliners outnumbered advancers 125 to 17 with 28 stocks unchanged.

A total of 2.1 billion shares worth ₱3.6 billion changed hands.

"Markets still are under pressure because earnings reports and economic data coming out from the United States are depressing and fanning fears of a recession," said Ann Hidaka of SB Capital Securities.

He said investors worry that the following US economy will weaken crimp demand for Philippine products and indirect remittances by Filipinos working abroad. But help remains consumer spending in the country.

More than 10 percent of some eight million Filipinos based abroad, or a tenth of the Philippines population, are in the United States.

There was also talk the Federal Reserve was holding an emergency meeting and might decide to cut interest rates ahead of its Jan. 30 policy meeting. Traders said.

"An interest rate cut of as much as 50 basis points is probably on the cards. It may help calm nerves and ease the dominance of the US going into a recession," said Soeder Tan of Regina Capital Development Corp. AFP

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Reduce or reuse? Recycling Market Day at SM Jan. 19

SM SUPERMALLS KICKS OFF THE YEAR with an eco-friendly vibe with a simultaneous Recycling Market Day on Saturday, Jan. 19 in all malls. Encouraged by the success of its first simultaneous waste market fair last December, it will now be holding the event every third Saturday of the month, beginning this January.

A joint project of the DENR Supermalls with the National Solid Waste Management Commission, Philippine Business for the Environment, Green Thing, EPWD-QC, and various government units, the Recycling Market Day will be participated in by various recycling companies. These include Pgarc, which buys empty cartridges and toners; Wind International Paper Company for papers and cartons; Polytrackers for plastic products; IBDR Enterprise for e-wastes or electronic waste; Moss and Philippine Recyclers Inc for old batteries, and Eliza for cross-ponics.

It will also feature composting and bokashi activities based on the Bokura, Bocasa, and Bocycle systems. At the start of the year, one of the resolutions we can make is how to care for the environment. Here are some tips on how to reduce and reuse from the Old Supermalls:

Reduce means avoiding waste, waste prevention, or waste reduction, which also means consuming and throwing away less. Here's how you can do it:

- Try using reusable and washable canvas bags or bayong instead of paper lunch bags. Also try using reusable containers instead of baggies, plastic wraps, or aluminum foil.
- Use e-mail instead of sending paper memos or reports.
- Bring a handkerchief instead of paper and plastic cups.
- Try using a mechanical instead of a regular pencil.
- Save on paper by using the blank side of bad copies. Also reuse the other side of memo documents instead of buying new scratch pads.
- Use non-chlorine bleach.
- Use long-life fluorescent light bulbs.
- Refillable "Do-it-really-need-this-item?"

Reusing items also reduces waste by preparing them, donating them to charity and community groups, and selling them. Here are some ways to reuse:

- Plastic milk jugs make great bird feeders.
- Spring clips on hangers make great paper clips for large bundles.
- Paper towel tubes are a pet rodent's and small animal's delight.
- That old rug will work great in the garage and keep grease and oil off the floor, make a soft spot for Spot, and keep kitty litter where it belongs.
- Baggie ties are great emergency shoelaces.
- Coffee cans can be used to bake bread, and store small toys, key garden tools, and sewing accessories.

Reduce, reuse, and recycle at the Recycling Market Day on Jan. 19 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. in all SM Supermalls.

A FREEDOM of various and paper collected during a whole day of Recycling Market Day at SM North EDSA.

LOGIC, government plays a big role in SM's Recycling Market Day with the Valenzuela City Waste Management Organization members (ladies in red) headed by Lourdes Big (3rd from left). Also shown are SM's marketing assistant officer Mabel Bautista (2nd from left) and TSY Jonik Alva (center Tonette Sy (2nd from right).

Honda expands dealership network in Ilocos

HONDA CARS PHILIPPINES Inc recently opened its 22nd dealership in the country, Honda Cars Rosal Norte (HCRN). Honda expands its dealership network in Ilocos Norte to bring in world-class quality products and services closer to its customers.

With the addition of Honda's latest dealership, Ilocanos now have more convenient access to state-of-the-art facilities, competent service technicians, well-trained sales associates and accommodating customer relations officers present in all other Honda dealerships. It offers sale of the latest vehicle models, parts and accessories, general repairs, preventive maintenance, body and paint repairs. Strategically located within the town of San Nicolas, Honda Cars Rosal Norte is just 10 minutes away from the province of Laoag.

Leading the inauguration ceremonies were San Nicolas Mayor Alfredo Valdez Jr. Honda Cars Philippines Inc president and general manager Noel Quisumbing and Honda Cars Ilocos Norte Inc general manager Melchor Co.

To know more about the dealership, call HCRN at (077) 782-3818.

PRSP receives record-breaking 200 Anvil entries

ENTERED TO THE 43RD ANVIL Awards reached over 200, the Public Relations Society of the Philippines reported recently.

"This is the highest level, therefore, in the Anvil Awards' 43-year history. PRSP is proud to note the very enthusiastic response by companies and public relations practitioners. This has made the Anvil awards even more prestigious," said Joris Ibañez, 43rd Anvil Awards chair.

The Anvil has two categories: PR programs and PR tools. These are further divided into various sub-categories, capped by the Bronze Anvil and the Grand Anvil awards. As of press time, a multi-second jury has already started reviewing the entries, which have already passed through a stringent screening and selection process.

"The criterion is such that unless standards are met, no award is given," Soliman emphasized.

Among past Anvil winners are some of the country's leading brands from global brands such as Del Monte, Intel, Pfizer and Shell, to local conglomerates, like Ayala Corp, Globe, Smart, JollibeeJuan Miguel Cojuangco and Manila North Tollways Corp.

The Anvil awarding ceremonies will be held on Feb. 15 at the Grand Ballroom of the InterContinental Manila in Makati City.

GARDENIA BREAD CELEBRATES 10 "HEALTHYLICIOUS" YEARS

Gardenia, a food company that manufactures a wide variety of fresh quality breads, has the distinction of becoming "The Premiere Company in the Baking Industry" during a presidential lunch-conference held recently. Gardenia is singularly driven and aligned behind delivering superior consumer value through providing the consumer with essential brands. The Gardenia trademark means value and is respected all over Asia. Since 2002, Gardenia has maintained its ISO International Organization for Standardization) 9001:2000 Certification for product quality excellence and HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) certification for food safety. For 2 consecutive years, Gardenia was awarded Superbrand status by Superbrands Ltd, an independent authority on brand value and branding. This confirms that Gardenia has met the stringent criteria of market dominance, longevity, goodwill, customer loyalty and overall market acceptance. Other notable awards are the Annual National Consumers Awards (Anna) as the "Outstanding Bread Manufacturer by the Consumer Union of the Philippines for the 4th straight year; the National Consumers Quality (People's Choice) Awards as the "Top Loaf Bread Brand"; the People's Brand Awards as the "Number One Loaf Bread and Pandesal Manufacturer" and the National Shopper's Choice Awards as "Number One Home-style Bread Brand". Shown during the Gardenia Yeni Nutty Wheat press conference are Gardenia Consultants Dean Jeff J. Albacea, baking operations consultant Isabel "Bambi Ong, president and general manager Cristina P. Bonoan-dan, manufacturing manager Ronald Ibanez, financial controller, and Nelia T. Candelaria, marketing and sales manager.

4th North Batangas Summit eyes environment

First Asia Institute of Technology and Humanities (FAITH) and Batangas Foundation Inc (BFI) announce the holding of the 4th North Batangas Summit on Jan 25 at the FAITH campus in Tanauan City, Batangas. This year, the summit's theme is "Environment, Quality of Life and Economic Progress: The Keys for a Thriving and Livable North Batangas". The summit is being organized to help spur the growth of the North Batangas area. The most vital component in the development of the Calabar corridor with corridor, taking into consideration proper urban planning which takes into account not only profits but also the people and the environment. The summit is a fulfillment of FAITH's mission of "serving the community through relevant extension and outreach programs." North Batangas Summit is part of the school's Collaborative Development Program, which is a community outreach initiative of FAITH. BFI has been leading the promotion of the development of North Batangas area through its North Batangas Summit. For more information, call lawyer Gay Francisco at FAITH at (043) 405-2305 or Dong Jongo at BFI at 892-5802. E-mail inquiries@faith.edu.ph.

Interaction with dolphins extended to Jan. 20

THE TRAVELING AQUARIUM SHOW FROM INDONESIA, "THE WONDERful World of Dolphins with the Sea Lions, is extended up to Jan. 20, due to the public's desire for more encounters and fellowship with the show's main attractions: the two bottle-nosed dolphins Tutti and Trudy, and the beloved lions, Jolla and Jacobo. Since Nov. 23, thousands of families and children have been enjoying the antics and stunts of the cheerful aquatic stars at the Mall-wide Complex on Mendiola Avenue, Pasay City. The double-act dolphins and multitalented lions perform astounding and incredible, play soccer and basketball, jump through rings and suspended hoops, and engage in all appliance. Other treats and treats are in store for the family, including an unforgettable ride for one lucky member of the audience on a boat pushed by the dolphins. The shows run daily at 4 p.m., 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on Monday to Friday, and at 2 p.m., 4 p.m., 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. on weekends and holidays. Ticket prices range from P300 to P500. For show and ticket inquiries, call 584-5402 or 584-5327.

ILLUSTRADO RESTO GOES BACK TO THE SOUTH

The Tausli In Seal, the Ilocano-style fine dining restaurant of the landmark and cafe from Ilocos and Ilocanos, is now open in the north of the opening of Starbucks Tomas Morato & Wine Bar at Bonifacio Alabang. It offers a ground floor dining area for 30 and upstairs for 90, including a private function room for 20. Both options and also a set up outside under the al fresco. Booking the eleven-course menu less than Mediterranean City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte's son, Davao Vice Mayor Paolo Duterte, and Bonifacio Global City Mayor Jejomar Binay's son, Makati Vice Mayor Jejomar Binay Jr. Shown during the launch are Illustrado Resto de Luzon's (L-R) Jeffrey Tan, Jeffrey Ng, Jeffrey Ng, Jeffrey Ng

BUSINESS

Customs seeks 'realistic' collection target

₱1/liter diesel price cut seen

By Abigail L. Ho

AN ATTENDANT pumps diesel into a passenger car. Motorists can look forward to lower diesel prices by mid-February due to a cut in the excise diesel imports.

MOTORISTS, PARTICULARLY those in the public transport sector, can expect diesel prices to go down by P1 a liter by mid-February with the implementation of an executive order slashing the tariff on crude and diesel imports.

Energy Secretary Angelo Reyes said the tariff level on crude and diesel would go down to 1 percent from the current 3 percent starting Feb. 1, with the cut to be reflected in the pump most likely beginning Feb. 15.

Under the draft implementing guidelines of the Malacañang order, the tariff on crude and diesel would go down by 1 percentage point increments when certain Dubai crude and Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) diesel price trigger points are met.

The tax tariff is go down to 2 percent from the current 3 percent, Dubai crude should be $65 a barrel and MOPS-based diesel $105 a barrel.

The tariff would be further reduced to 1 percent at $60 a barrel for Dubai crude and $110 a barrel for MOPS-based diesel, and then would be scrapped altogether at $60 crude and for Dubai crude and $115 a barrel for MOPS-based diesel.

We'll issue the implementing guidelines on exactly how this should be done, likely within the week," Reyes said in a briefing yesterday. "We have made our computations and we can now recommend and certify that the trigger points to result in a 2-percentage-point reduction in oil import tariff have been breached."

According to data from the Department of Energy, the regional benchmark Dubai crude had surged to a January average of $96.79 a barrel from only $82.43 a barrel last month.

The price of MOPS-based oil, Singapore gasoline traded on average of $100.29 a barrel in the first 15 days of January from last month's average of $90.27 a barrel.

MOPS-based diesel also soared to $110.98 a barrel in the Jan. 1-15 period, significantly higher than the $106.16-a-barrel average posted in December.

"We decided to focus (the tariff reduction) on diesel as this would have the most impact. If we implement the tariff reduction across the board...including gasoline, diesel and kerosene—the impact will just be half of what can be realized at the pump when it is applied only to diesel," he said.

Morales says goal for the year should be lower than ₱228B

By Michelle V Remo

LISTENING TO CALL FOR A "REALISTIC" revenue collection target amid a rising peso, the Bureau of Customs said its goal for the year should be lower than the P228.2 billion set for last year.

The BOC failed to meet its target for 2007, saying its performance was dragged down by the appreciation of the peso. Setting the target for this year no more than the 2007 level would not be sensible, Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales said.

Citing government estimates, Morales said the BOC loses P5 billion in potential collections of duties and import taxes for every one unit of peso appreciation against the US dollar.

The peso strengthening reduces the BOC's revenues because tariffs and taxes are computed based on the peso value of imports. Imported goods become cheaper in peso terms whenever the local currency appreciates.

The Customs chief said the P228.2 billion collection target set for the agency in 2007 was based on the assumption that the peso would average 46 versus the US dollar.

For 2008 the BOC is tasked to collect P254.4 billion, but Morales said the foreign exchange assumption by government economic managers was set at an average of 43 to a US dollar.

"What is the mathematical explanation for the increase in the BOC's target when the peso is expected to rise and collection would drop as a result?" Morales said in a briefing yesterday.

He also stressed that the foreign exchange assumption used as basis for determining its target for 2007 was not even realized. In 2007, the peso averaged in about 43 to a US dollar, not 46, Morales said.

The BOC's target is set by the Department of Finance, its mother agency, and approved by the Interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC).

DOF and BOC officials met the other day to discuss their revenue collection goals for this year.

During the meeting, Morales said the BOC aired its concern over what it considered an unrealistic target and asked for a reduction in its 2008 goal.

He said the BOC should be tasked to collect an amount based on the actual exchange rate, and not on conservative foreign exchange estimates.

"The peso is already at about 40 to a dollar, this must be the assumption used in setting our target," Morales said.

The DOF is in the process of reviewing the BOC's targets for the year. Documents from the DOF earlier showed that it was looking at slashing the BOC's P254.4-billion target for this year by P14.2 billion, or to only P240.1 billion.

But Morales said that even a P240.1-bil. lion target was still unrealistic.

The BOC is the second-biggest revenue earner among line agencies, after the bureau of Internal Revenue. Its ability to achieve its target allows the government's ability to meet its fiscal target for a year.

The BOC's P254.4-billion target for this year is consistent with the government's aim of posting a balanced budget.

Achieving the budget is a cornerstone mission by the Arroyo administration.

The DOF earlier said macroeconomic factors, such as foreign exchange, were not the only things taken into account in setting revenue targets. The targets of improving efficiency of collection is also factored in when setting revenue goals.

HGC to raise ₱10B for debt refinancing

HOME GUARANTY CORP., THE state-owned company providing guarantee cover to housing loans, will borrow P10 billion from the domestic capital market this year to refinance some of its outstanding debts.

"We want to do some refinancing to take advantage of low interest rates," Gonzalo Benjamin Sinaglao, president of HGC, said in a briefing yesterday.

He said the manner of borrowing, either through bond floats or direct loans, will be discussed with the Department of Finance.

Sinaglao said HGC had P21 billion in outstanding liabilities, P13 billion of which was incurred through the sale of zero coupon bonds.

Most of the debts were a result of unpaid guarantee fees that forced HGC to borrow just so it could perform its mandate of paying lenders that encountered defaults on housing loans that were guaranteed by HGC.

HGC charges banks and lending institutions a guarantee rate of between 0.1 and 1.5 percent of the amount guaranteed. He said HGC collected P414 million in premium payments last year, a 15.7 percent increase from the P374 million collected in 2006.

Clients of HGC include Pag-Ibig, Social Security System, Government Service Insurance System, commercial banks and thrift banks.

The low interest rate environment has encouraged many organizations, including the national government, to borrow and then use the proceeds to prepay debts that carry higher interest rates.

Sinaglao said HGC had P64 billion in outstanding guarantees as of end-2007, slightly higher than the P63 billion as of end-2006.

Michelle V Remo

Business group proposes taxes on nonessential goods

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE CHAMBER OF COMmerce and Industry yesterday pushed for the imposition of higher taxes on a number of new uses on "sin" products and on goods and services considered "nonessential to everyday life."

Donald G. Dee, PCCI chair emeritus, said in an interview the business group was calling for a significant shift in the country's fiscal mindset in light of the conditions that will prevail in the world's existing export market due to the strengthening of the peso.

"There is a need for strong political will to pursue greater tax efficiency and implementation of new and enhanced tax measures to begin a crucial shift on tax policies in the country that rely heavily on corporate and income taxes," Dee said.

He added that while the economy and the peso were performing very well, it was necessary to restructure the current fiscal reform program to give more weight on taxing sin, luxury and nonessential products and services.

Apart from cigarettes, spirits and liquors, Dee said increased levies and regressions fees should be imposed on luxury cars, private jets and yachts and other luxury items that were deemed unnecessary to everyday living.

"Consumers of these products must be willing to pay a premium for smoking them, to help the domestic economy and the various sectors affected by significant movement in oil prices and peso appreciation," Dee said.

Further, the PCCI official cited World Health Organization data which showed that the cigarette tax in Singapore was equivalent to $192.96 per 1,000 sticks, while that in Brunei is at $70.3.

"The data also showed that in Malaysia, cigarettes are taxed $53.49 per 1,000 sticks but in the Philippines, the excise tax on cigarettes ranges from only $1.42 to $37.28 per 1,000 sticks," Dee added.

He said that whenever additional revenues raised from new tax measures must be channeled directly to address affected by the sharp increase in the oil prices.

"Foremost among other beneficiaries to this measure must be the transport sectors," he said. "It's high time that our transport groups are given subsidies based on agreed trigger price relative to the movement of oil prices in the world market."

"Ultimately, the basic premise of taxation has to go hand-in-hand collecting and increasing corporate and income tax," Dee said.

Philex Mining Corporation
Philex Bldg., 37 Brixton Street
Pasig City, Philippines

January 2, 2008

NOTICE
Regarding Special Shareholders Meeting
Scheduled on January 04, 2008

Dear Stockholder:

As earlier announced, the Special Stockholders Meeting of PHILEX MINING CORPORATION (the "Corporation") scheduled on December 6, 2007 was postponed to January 04, 2008 due to insufficiency of time to gather the required proxies. The details of the new schedule are:

New Date	Thursday, January 04, 2008
Time	2:00 p.m.
Venue	Ballroom A, Crowne Plaza Galleria Manila Ortigas Avenue corner ADB Avenue, Quezon City

PLEASE NOTE THAT AT THIS MEETING, ONLY THE 30% STOCK DIVIDEND WILL BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL, as the Board of Directors of the Corporation, at its meeting held on December 18, 2007, resolved to remove the item on the amendment of the Articles of Incorporation to deny pre-emptive rights under certain circumstances from the matters to be submitted to the shareholders for approval.

Accordingly, Part D, Item 17 on page 6 of the Information Statement dated November 8, 2007 provided to you for the meeting are deemed amended to delete the item on the denial of pre-emptive rights.

Proxies already submitted, as well as those still to be submitted, will be voted only for the item on the approval of the 30% stock dividend.

WE WOULD LIKE TO REQUEST THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET SUBMITTED THEIR PROXIES TO SUBMIT THESE TO THE OFFICE OF THE UNDERSIGNED ON OR BEFORE MONDAY, JANUARY 21, 2008, TO ATTAIN THE REQUIRED 67% VOTE TO PASS THE RESOLUTION ON THE 30% STOCK DIVIDEND (Refer to Part C, Item 9 on page 4 of the Information Statement).

We look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

BARBARA ANNE C. MEALLOS
Corporate Secretary

LIFESTYLE

IN THIS ISSUE
- Reggie Aspiras on how to marinate /C3
- Micky Fenix writes on siopao /C3

RESTAURANT REVIEW

'Who gets the burger?'

At Mickey's Delicatessen the food will make you want to come back, but the 'funny' service seems straight out of the Disney cartoons

By Gino Nuria

FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REmember, trying to find parking on Jupiter Street in Makati has been harder than finding a size 5-34 a Nine-West knee in Manila.

When we drove up the first time for consideration, I was already contemplating parking by Ayala Avenue and walking the rest of the way. Fortunately, we scored the 5-hall parking lot but, surprisingly, the security guard/valet parker, instructed me to double-park and assured me with words that he would park my car as soon as a spot opened up. We received the same treatment on all four visits.

It is quite entertaining that the owners have even opened a cubicle to the personnel packing problem among the establishments on Jupiter Street.

The location soundly greeted us as we walked in and promptly sat us.

The interiors reflect a typical Overseas pub deli, with wood flooring and brick-walls that bring warmth to the place. Black-and-white framed photos (presumably depicting faces of the owners' favorites) adorn the walls and female staff in red-and-white pouch-style dresses complete the atmosphere.

Show kitchen

The food is freshly prepared in the open kitchen enclosed in glass. The show kitchen provides some embellishment to the smiling cooks season and slap steaks, chops and sausages on the grill. A deli counter loops around the back of the restaurant showcasing a wide variety of imported cheeses, hams and homemade sausages.

Adjacent to the dining area is John Lee Hoo's on-site bakery called "Lutrijan." You can watch the bakers make everything from baguettes and sourdough to croissants and ciabatta. The smell is intoxicating enough to make you want to sink your teeth into one of those freshly baked ciabattas with butter even!

The menu is easy to read and has something for everyone—families, couples, groups. Chef-owner Michael Beck, reputedly a chief-gourmet-in-kitchen from Germany, set himself to Evangelia.

Cold cuts, assorted cheeses and by-the-meter sausages are in very section of the menu. They also have dishes for sharing that I recommend for parties of four or more.

The value for dinner a fine selection from France and Italy (although it had chardonnay and Syrah) is excellent. Be sure to catch Happy Hour (without drinking establishes which sort of killed the elegance of the leather-bound wine list).

Our first visit was on a beautiful sunny day for lunch. The restaurant had only three tables occupied since it was early. We placed our orders with the friendly waiter and our drinks were immediately served. Time to sit back and drink in the colors he said, "Who ordered the Coke Light?"

I thought he was trying to be funny by pretending not to know who ordered what, since we were only a party of two. I smiled sat into the table, trying hard not to let it affect me.

The Caesar Salad was weak in the three departments: soggy (was no much dressing and was served on a very wide plate, I searched high and low and waited for the garlic can have a stake to lock in. Also, it never did. Come to the source!

Superb sausages

The house specialty Nuremberger Rostbratwurst with roast Potato Dodel was tasty I wished I had ordered the 10-piece serving. The three-hand with basic bite was excellent as well. I would rate it by itself.

We encountered a full restaurant on our second visit five days later. The first thing I noticed was that the clutter of the pants was bouncing off the walls. We could hardly hear our another because of the table.

We had to grab a waiter to ask for something. Nevertheless, the staff was extremely friendly and charming without trying too hard. We placed our orders and watched the chefs work in the far through the glass.

Our waiter arrived without food and unfortunately asked, "Who gets the burger?" Was he kidding me? Again? We were a table of four and he couldn't remember our orders? It didn't help that he had to ask again who got which drink. At this point I was thinking, Hmmm... time to open a school for waiters.

This time around, the Warm Green Salad with homemade dressing was an absolute summer. The greens, fresh cherry tomatoes, crunchy green grapes and warm toasted tuna were positively dressed with Balsamic Vinaigrette.

The Four-Cheese Pizza, with the Gabriele from Umbria as its crust, was rustic in its presentation and generously topped with assorted cheeses from the deli selection.

The Italian Burger was humongous, so I had to take it apart with a knife and fork to tackle it. The burger was flavorful but a bit overdone which made it dry and tough. Dried high hopes for the Angus Burger, but it seemed like the same cook-as-you-like-it-burger-I-like-it-not as well.

On yet another visit a week later, Michael Beck was behind the grill and the US Italian Steak with potatoes that he prepared left no speculation. Perfectly cooked steak is a rarity in these parts.

Clearly, Beck possesses the kind of love and passion for his craft that cannot be taught in any culinary school out there today.

Tongue twister but tasty

I was disappointed to find only two items on the dessert menu. Since Chocolate Cake was for kind anywhere, we opted for the dessert we could not pronounce.

Bananabrannen, a warm, shredded pancake with caramelized apples, raisins and vanilla ice cream, is a unusual delight to savor in phases all your senses. At P175, this dessert is a winner since it can be shared by at least three people.

The reason as Mickey's is probably another area that needs to be addressed. I was there for lunch at 11:30 a.m. and was treated to some house music that made my feet like I was at a rave party back in the '90s.

By 1 p.m. the same had shifted to the sentimental "Bridge Over Troubled Water" by Simon and Garfunkel.

It's the small details that make a big difference. But the food at Mickey's will definitely make you come back by itself, from the award-winning sausages to the fresh baked bread.

E-mail the author at ginonuria@yahoo.com.ph.

Review card

Rating: Very Good ★★★

Restaurant: Mickey's Delicatessen

Location:
144 Jupiter cor. Orbit Streets, Bel-Air 2 Village, Makati
Tel. [illegible]; e-mail: [illegible]

Service:
Cheerful and friendly, but need additional training on basic service procedures

Prices:
Starters, P85-P600; soups and salads, P85-P270; pizza P380-P620; sandwiches, P190-P440; entrees, P240-P1,200

Best dishes:
Warm Green Salad with Cream Crepes and Balsamic Vinaigrette; US Steak; all homemade sausages

Wine list:
Decent selection of wines from France and Italy

Best table:
Banquette table facing the open kitchen

Details:
Open for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. Major credit cards accepted.

Rating is based on food, service and ambiance as well as how much we enjoyed or suffered in quality.	
Outstanding in every level	★★★★★
Excellent	★★★★
Very good	★★★
Good	★★
Passable	★

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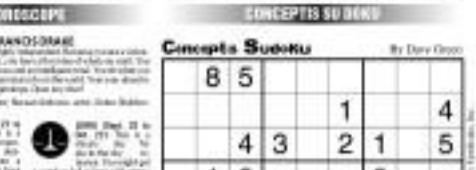
A diario novela by CARLO J. CAPARAS

To have and to hold

Art: ARNEL A. AVETRIA



DAILY CROSSWORD

HOROSCOPE

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

	8	5						
					1			4
		4	3		2	1		5
	1	3				9		
				2				
		7				8	1	
8		2	9		3	5		
3			4					
						6	7	

Difficulty Level ★★★

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

5	2	6	3	1	9	7	4	8
7	4	1	2	8	5	3	6	9
3	9	8	4	6	7	2	1	5
8	3	2	1	7	4	9	5	6
9	6	7	8	5	2	4	3	1
4	1	5	6	9	3	8	7	2
1	5	9	7	3	8	6	2	4
6	7	4	9	2	1	5	8	3
2	8	3	5	4	6	1	9	7

Conceptis Puzzles, Dare to Compare (conceptis.com)

KITCHEN RESCUE
Reggie Aspiras

The tricky process of marinating

CAN YOU PLEASE TEACH ME about marinating?

LYNEL

Lynel, marinating is a tricky subject and there are many opposing views about it.

In my case, I marinate according to the end result I want. The following points are also taken into consideration... how much time I have, what I am marinating (chicken, beef, pork, etc.) and what I am marinating it with.

Marinating could mean leaving your meat, seafood or vegetables in a mixture as simple as salt and pepper or as complex as a combination of herbs, spices, some acid, garlic.

The longest to marinate, I find, are chicken and pork as well as non-lean/non-prime cuts of beef. Flavors take way longer to penetrate.

I hardly ever marinate prime steaks, non-onion, of course. I am making barbecues of some sort. If I decide to do roast beef or simple grilled steak, I use mainly salt and pepper, pepper and mustard powder (for roasting) just before I roast or grill it.

For lamb leg roasts, however, I like them marinated overnight in a mixture of spices, garlic and herbs to which I add a bit of olive oil. I then brush the roast beef or steaks with a little more oil to make it more moist.

Lamb chops, on the other hand, I never like overnight. I prefer just before I grill. Lamb racks I rub and either marinate overnight or just minutes before roasting or searing.

NINE PERCENT: marinated

Pork chops and ribs I usually prefer marinated overnight. Pork ribs for roasting, I like marinate overnight.

Seafood, I hardly ever marinate. If I ever do, I do it for 20 minutes, maximum, depending on my desired result.

Chicken, on the other hand, for roasting, frying, grilling, is best marinated, I find, at least six hours or overnight. Try it-quite a major difference!

Since let me speak of my latest and, for that reason, obviously my favorite gadget. It is called a nine-minute marinator. I have been wanting to write about it since December because I thought it would make a perfect gift for a cook, but never got the chance to.

I use it for tips, ribs, satay, kebabs, chicken wings, fried chicken. A whole roast chicken even fits inside the container.

This is a rotisserie version of those found in most processing plants that are used to marinate meats quickly.

How does a marinator work? "The marinator, together with the rotisserie, tenderizes the muscle fibers of the various foods to open up to allow the marinade to penetrate to the meat thoroughly. The result is a moist, plump and flavorful food...less time, less mess and less waste."

I first came across the nifty gadget on the home shopping television network. Sure it again at Conrado's and wondered if it really worked. I tried it and, to my surprise, it does, beautifully. I now regularly use it in class for recipes that require hours of marination.

My inputs on the use of the marinator are based on how I have used it for my cooking to get optimum flavor in a jiffy. It should be equivalent to nine minutes.

For beef or lamb kebabs—one round

For chicken wings—two rounds

Whole chicken—four rounds

Tapa—one round

Turon—two rounds

Pork chops—three rounds

Pork barbecues—two to three

The marinator comes highly recommended for those serious cooking types into concrete mode of barbecuing, grilling and recipes that require long hours of marination.

PS. Get it from Gaisano Inc. (7575771, 8875007, 8870350 or 8833471). It comes on changes. No shipping or it is called delivery charge?

Will you please send me the best *pan de sal* and bagoo recipes. My chief at camp wanted like to make it for us.

ELSIE PEDEZ
Fort McMurray, Alberta

Fry Guna and Basil! Sorry for my very late response. About the pan de sal, boy had bread on long. John! Sorry but I already featured a recipe for it before. Here is my favorite "Shanghai" recipe though. Yummy!

Lumpiang Shanghai

½ k ground pork
½ k ground shrimp
1/2 c dried shiitake mushrooms, soaked and chopped
1/2 c un-minced, water chestnuts, carrots, coriander leaves (optional)—chopped finely
¼ c each green onions and leeks
2 tbsp minced garlic
1 tbsp light soy sauce
1 tsp each—salt, pepper and sugar
1 tsp sesame oil
1 egg
1 tsp liquid smoke, optional—this gives the texture a nice light, smoked flavor

Combine ingredients in a food processor. If you need it to mix together, mixture should be sticky, like paste.

Wrap in lumpia wrappers. Deep fry.

Shanghai Sauce:

1 c orange marmalade
1 c orange juice
4 tbsp wine vinegar
1 tbsp fresh ginger, shredded
1/3 c pineapple chunks, chopped
½ c tomato catsup
¼ c water
2 tsp cornstarch
2 tbsp brown sugar
2 tbsp white sugar
2 tsp hoisin sauce
1¼ tbsp soy sauce

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan. Boil until thickened. Process in chinaware.

E-mail the author at reggie@inquirer.com.ph

THE CONSUMER

Cheap copies may not mean savings

By Linda B. Hobbs

SOMETIMES, IN TRYING TO SAVE money, we end up spending more.

We buy cheap tools that break almost as soon as we use them, clothes that lose their shape and/or their colors the first time they are washed, or copies of branded products that may look nearly like the original but do not perform as well.

The cost difference between the real thing and its clone may seem much for the often shorter life span and poor performance of the copy, when quantified, usually outside, even intrinsic, the saving.

Heather Packard, for instance, commissioned recently a study to find out the difference between the original inkjet print cartridges, among the most frequently "cloned" items, and remanufactured or refilled cartridges.

Conducted by the technical test organization TUV SUD PSB, the study covering Asia Pacific found, among other things, that the real thing produced 100.6 percent more pages than the "copies."

More than a fourth of the refills or remanufacturers, the study also found, failed almost as soon as they were installed.

Neil Pillai, marketing manager for supplies category imaging and printing group, HP Asia Pacific, said, "Ink cartridge customers across the Asia Pacific are unaware of the issues in reliability when printing with remanufactured and refilled cartridges ... We commissioned the study to expose the concealed real costs involved in and sometimes have a more informed choice."

He pointed out that consumers have time and money from high failure rates of remanufactured and refilled cartridges.

The study, conducted February-June 2007, evaluated the page yield and reliability of 107 branded inkjet cartridges from 14 brands of remanufactured or refilled cartridges from the Asia Pacific region.

'Greening' the consumer

But, of course, wise consumption is not just about saving money. It is also about saving our scarce natural resources so we have enough for ourselves and future generations.

Conservation International (CI) says it is actually becoming easier and easier to know what effects our consumption patterns have on the environment.

It encourages consumers to be aware of what products are made of, where they come from, and how they are brought to the market.

"All of this knowledge does reduce how you impact biodiversity in your backyard and around the world," CI says.

It reminds consumers that they have the power to choose what to buy.

"Consume less. Use things until they wear out, buy second-hand, repurpose old things into something new. Choose products...printer paper, canvas totes for groceries, bank checks, or clothes...that are made of recycled material or can be reused or recycled," it says.

The study also found usual consumables are of unused reused and recycled materials. Support companies that think about the environment like you do," CI says.

When buying purses, real plants, glasses, and makeup should be used. Not only will points feel special, but a huge amount of waste will also be avoided.

CI adds, "Reduce, reuse, recycle, and compost to reduce your weekly trash contributions to our bigger loss."

Review your water, electric, gas and other utility bills and find ways to save by living more efficiently.

Misrepresentation

A little before noon on Jan. 14, a woman knocked on my door and introduced herself as a representative of the Manila Electric Company.

She wanted to know my month-by-month consumption. This was not an unusual request because Meralco and Maynilad Water people occasionally do spot checks on monthly consumption. I presume to determine who are not paying the right amount.

After looking at my bill, she said I could reduce my consumption by enrolling with their company. She mumbled a name that I did not catch.

When I pointed out to her that she appeared at my doorstep to introducing herself as a Meralco representative, she made a hasty retreat.

Send letters to The Consumer, *Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, China Banking Corp. Mezzanine and Tuason Sts., Makati City or e-mail lbobbs@inquirer.com.ph*

COUNTRY COOKING
Micky Fenix

Show of sio

AS I WRITE THIS, IT IS RAINING, IT IS pouring and I am hankering for sopas and acerola, the local steamed bun and pork dumpling.

Since I am thinking of going out in spite of the shower to get my comfort food I'll...

Of course, it has to be Ma Mon Luk. And, luckily, I live near it. Ma Mon Luk on Quezon Avenue near Banawe in Quezon City, Pi., I can add, sounds like Kamuning.

One of the heirs of the man who started it all.

Ma Mon Luk, also known as the Mami Guy, looks at you from a painting on the wall opposite the restaurant entrance. The place now carries other dishes but, when I think of going there, it is always because of the sopas and siomai.

Whenever sopas is mentioned, a debate ensues because each person has a favorite. Quezon will be defended with thought. Batac and, sometimes, even Ilocos.

My late friend chef Jandy Daroy would have nothing but Kowloon sopas bola-bola, his relative Pia told me recently. My mother's favorite there was the sopas-siomai.

Original tastebud

Kowloon sopas is all its presumptions was since the food of her ancestors when my mother did not have anything planned for dinner. And Kowloon's convenient location made me my breakfast pit stop ages ago on coming home from working all night to a broadcast station.

Even if my taste buds did not always approve of what I ordered, it provided me entertainment before the food arrived.

My friends like Pia Lim Cuadrilo insist dark sopas. It is small and, if you really want to, can be finished in one bite.

But it is not for children's palates despite, or precisely because of, its size. It disappears too fast for the mouths of babies. It is best for adult parties, debating one was thinking that the small portion is great for one's diet (nonathenbook@gmail.com, tel. 7209413).

My sister Jane ordered what she called chopsuey for our New Year feasting. It is sopas bola-bola with sotanghon, mushrooms and egg but not mixed together. If you divided the huge sopas, you may get just the sotanghon part, lucky you. Small beside Happy Wheels Workshop, Antonio Arnaiz, call Suzy Tuason at 42.

But, for me, it is still Ma Mon Luk. Nothing can beat the sopas dough. It is not as fine or as smooth as that of Kowloon's but its spongy quality is a plus for me, my kind of food.

When I bite into it, the cherished meat inside smells of five-spice powder, the one present flavoring in many Chinese dishes. And I am reminded of many wonderful adventures in Chinatown with my parents and siblings.

Nourished by 'siomai'

And the siomai? It must be registered in my DNA. When my mother was pregnant with me she said she went to the original Ma Mon Luk in Chinatown every day for about a month. She would have it, as I do now, with chicken broth.

A friend from Assumption College told me she used to climb their school canteen inside the last period. That is, until she discovered it was ordered from Ma Mon Luk.

In Iloilo City we ate at Jacob and Thess Robredoxamen where the cook supposedly came from Ma Mon Luk. It is at the old airport place in Mandurriao. But it is at Robredo's in the downtown area (tel. 1.M. Rosario.) where one can get a real huge sopas. It is called "Quezon" and is not always available.

Luckily, I was there when the roll order dictated the "Quezon" should make its appearance.

I still do not understand when it is supposed to make an appearance because Chinese schedules are complicated by seven astrology-combinations after to me.

Robredo's special sopas is as big as a platter, enough for five people. It is bola-bola inside, which makes it more dense because the meat-jelly is not lost.

So how do you eat your sopas?

Eating the sopas

Ma Mon Luk serves the sauce in squeeze bottles when you are eating in. They put the sauce to avoid plastic packs. But I prefer it poured. If you do not have a pair of scissors, it is difficult to apply the sauce to the sopas. That is not a problem for my because I never put sauce. I feel the acidic mix is good enough, but I do put in hot sauce when I eat Chinese bola-bola mainly.

In Pantranggo, they eat sopas with ketchup. That is not surprising if you know that *pansit* is also eaten with ketchup.

My generation has to pool the sauce covering of the sopas. My grandmother told us that people handled the sopas with their hands or packing would ensure that what you ate would be clean.

My children looked on puzzled, as I did what my grandmother told me to do. They opened that sauce sopas was concerned, whatever was not fit to eat had been discarded. And that food was handled most safely now with plastic gloves.

Although they made sense, it is difficult to break the habit.

Sopas is now a mainstay in many eateries and fast food malls or carinderias. And you can tell when's sopas is sold because of a generic display consisting of a glass case held together by an aluminum frame.

But it does not seem to keep the sopas as hot as those in huge bamboo steamers stacked on top of each other at Ma Mon Luk and many other Chinese dim sum shops.

There is a version called pato pao, a combination of pato as bun and the sopas made as filling. It is innovative, yes, but I prefer my sopas as is, thank you.

E-mail the author at pinoyfood3k@yahoo.com

QUEEN: sopas at Robredo's in Iloilo City

Now serving: Italy's favorite coffee

LAVAZZA, THE MOST POPULAR coffee in Europe, is now available at Café Enzo in SM, the highest end membership-warehouse club in the country.

The Lavazza *caffè corretto* is served by Café Enzo fan branches at SM Pasay, SM Mahang and SM Congressional.

The Lavazza blend at Café Enzo is patronized by the original and frozen kinds. The kinds have been designed to streamline coffee preparations and serve customers more efficiently.

Mariano Santamaria, general manager of Café Enzo, notices how the quality of Lavazza coffee served in every store is consistent. He says the cafe puts emphasis on quality, cleanliness and customer service.

"My emphasis to our staff was that they should be proud to be serving the most popular coffee in Europe and they should share this when serving our customers," said Santamaria.

He said, 10 SM's most of the customers appreciated the quality and taste of Lavazza and preferred the coffee over other brands they simply promoted lifestyle.

"The taste is far more superior to other popular coffee brands," according to our customer.

"Coffee lovers don't have to go to hotels and expensive restaurants to enjoy Lavazza coffee. We readily make it available to them at Café Enzo," Santamaria said.

In addition to Italian coffee, Lavazza c.d. Café Enzo also has a gastronomy Dubai menu as prepared by Mauro "Boy" Rivera Jr., managing director.

CAFÉ Enzo at the 56th Congressional branch

A graduate of Alpina Hotel Management School in Switzerland, Rivera said 90 percent of their ingredients were imported from Italy, the main reason many customers keep coming back for the taste.

Lavazza c.d. Café Enzo was authorized by Bacchus International, exclusive distributor of Lavazza in the Philippines, to develop the cafe mini-franchise of the Italian coffee in the local market.

Previously, Lavazza Italy through Bacchus, sent Tony Bellotti to Manila to train Café Enzo's baristas on the correct way of making espresso and brewing other coffee variants.

Lavazza c.d. Café Enzo launched recently the Italian Cup promo. Customers can exchange a completed Enzo Card for authentic knitted jackets, polos, T-shirts and caps.

Last month, Lavazza c.d. Café Enzo opened its third full-service café at Eastwood Cinema.

CAFÉ Enzo at SM Mahang

CARBONARA Pasta

GRANITA Strawberry Ice Cream

LAVAZZA coffee

AALA
We are the Academy for International Culinary Arts
– the real academy where Great Chefs are made.
February 19 (Morning Class)
Diploma in International Culinary Arts and Professional Kitchen Management
February 23 & 24
Professional Kitchen Management

DINING OUT

New menu for new year

CONGO GRILLE HAS LAUNCHED a new menu. Theater Menu, a collaboration of Congo chefs, features traditional meals across including popular regional specialties done with a twist.

Jungle Fiesta (appetizers) include Deconstructed Wings, Baked Scallops and Oriental Spring Rolls. Wok Shoots (soups) include Dangwa Salad, Ilonggo Sancocho Mixto, Pochero, Bulalo and Sinigang sa Bayabas.

Grilled Items include Bicol Express Chicken, Sizzling Seafood, Sizzling Fried Rice, Sizzling Chorizo Fried Rice, Sizzling Clams with Tausi, Chicken in Pandan Leaves and Crustacean Prawn Specials. Also available are Chicken Curry, Pork Binagoongan, Salt and Pepper Spareribs, Minute Burger, Tenderloin Steak, Pinoy Grilled Bangus, Seafood Delta, Fried Rice, and Bihon Mami/Bihon Guisado, vegetable, rice and noodle dishes are also offered. Congo Grille now has nine outlets in Metro Manila and other parts of Luzon (0922-899-80, www.congogrille.com).

CONGO Grille's Grilled Pork and Congo Bringhe

SUGAR-FREE CHOCOLATE TREAT

Buenavista cake is every bit a heavyweight with its topcoat of luscious chocolate. Inside you will find sugar-free Belgian chocolate cremeux. Flavored with truffle cake, white chocolate vanilla and dark ganache, this high-quality treat will make you go for over (boo), especially with the addition of almond nuts. This delightful treat is available at Kinabalu & Luzon at the Cyber X Fashion Mall, Araneta City, 6473554 or 632 897-4EWEITY.

ENTERTAINMENT

From rivals to partners

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photos by Augee de la Cruz

A preview of Marian and Richard's chemistry... cariño brutal is more like it

IF YOU WERE TO BELIEVE THE GOSSIP columnists, Richard Gutierrez was upset with GMA 7, which was perceived to be favoring "Stainless" over his own show "Kamandag."

Before his own Anabelle Rama could throw one of her infamous hissing fits, Richard was promptly paired with Marian Rivera, star of "Marimar," in a new Valentine movie.

In an exclusive interview with Inquirer Entertainment, Richard and Marian denied the scuttlebutt.

Before Richard could say a word, however, Marian jokingly clowned him with detached

from "Magpakasaysaysa (David hotter kaysa!)."

The above-mine might as well be a preview of the no. and-all-scenes chemistry of the stars of the new GMA Film-Regal flick, "My Best Friend's Girlfriend."

Director Mark Reyes related that the pair hit it off well from the start: "Richard and Marian found working on a romantic comedy a refreshing break from the intense drama scenes of 'Kamandag' and 'Stainless'."

More on A2

ROBINSONS MOVIEWORLD CINEMAS MOVIE GUIDE

www.robinsonsmovieworld.com

MOVIE SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

GALLERIA

1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2 - THE	6 DRAGON WAR
2 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS	7 I AM LEGEND
3 I COULD NEVER BE YOUR WOMAN	8 subs/line: SIKIL
4 THE HEARTBREAK KID	9 DESPERADAS
5 SWEENEY TODD	10 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO

ERMITA

1 DRAGON WAR	6 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	7 I COULD NEVER BE YOUR WOMAN
3 BEE MOVIE	1 DESPERADAS
4 THE HEARTBREAK KID	2 I AM LEGEND
5 SWEENEY TODD	3 NATIONAL TREASURE 2

METRO EAST

1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	5 THE HEARTBREAK KID
2 DRAGON WAR	6 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
3 I COULD NEVER BE YOUR WOMAN	7 I AM LEGEND
4 SWEENEY TODD	8 DESPERADAS

NOVALICHES

1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	5 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
2 DRAGON WAR	6 I AM LEGEND
3 SWEENEY TODD	7 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
4 THE HEARTBREAK KID	8 DESPERADAS

PIONEER

1 SWEENEY TODD	3 DRAGON WAR
2 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS	4 NATIONAL TREASURE 2 / THE HEARTBREAK KID

STA. ROSA

1 SWEENEY TODD	5 DESPERADAS
2 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	
3 I AM LEGEND	
4 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	

LIPA

1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	5 KATAS ng SAUDI
2 I AM LEGEND	
3 DEATH PROOF	
4 DESPERADAS	

DASMARINAS

1 SWEENEY TODD	5 DESPERADAS
2 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS	6 I AM LEGEND
3 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	
4 I AM LEGEND	

IMUS

1 SWEENEY TODD	5 THE HEARTBREAK KID
2 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS	6 DESPERADAS
3 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	6 I AM LEGEND
4 THE HEARTBREAK KID	

ANGELES

1 SWEENEY TODD	4 I AM LEGEND
2 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS	5 DESPERADAS
3 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	6 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO
4 DESPERADAS	

TARLAC

1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	3 DESPERADAS
2 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO	

STARMILLS

1 SWEENEY TODD	4 I AM LEGEND
2 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS	5 DESPERADAS
3 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	6 SAKAL SAKALI SAKLOLO

BACOLOD

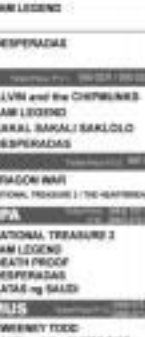
1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	4 DESPERADAS
2 I AM LEGEND	5 subs/line: 2 DAYS of DARKNESS TRAWA
3 BEE MOVIE / ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE	6 ELIZABETH: THE GOLDEN AGE

ILOILO

1 NATIONAL TREASURE 2	4 DESPERADAS
2 I AM LEGEND	
3 DEATH PROOF	

SM CINEMA movietime SHOWTIME

Your life as a movie



NOW SHOWING

From rivals...

From page B1

Boys recounted that the pair would often taunt each other on the set.

The rapport is also pretty obvious in these recent photos.

Is it true that you got jealous because GMA 7 seemed to be favoring "Marimar" over "Rosalinda"?

Richard Gutierrez: That's not true.

Marian Rivera: We better answer properly!

RG: I'm glad that "Marimar" is doing well. I'm happy because, in GMA 7, we work as one unit.

MR: Each soap affects the show following it. We're all connected. We help pull each other up. For us, what's important is not the ratings, that "Marimar" rated six (points) and "Rosalinda," 20. For us, what is crucial is that we please the viewers.

RG: And that all the shows on GMA 7 are being watched by the intended audiences.

What was your reaction when you learned that Marian would be your new partner?

RG: I got excited, of course.

MR: Jokanan: (You're pulling my leg). He didn't want to work with me. He preferred another girl. Joke lang.

What was your reaction when you learned of your movie with Richard?

MR: I am not surprised and excited to hear a new leading man. I always learn something new with every person I work with.

RG: Really? What did you learn from me?

MR: Do you really want me to reveal what I learned about you [laughs]?

RG: Never mind.

What was your first impression of Marian?

RG: I first met her on the set of [the GMA 7 Sunday variety show] SOP over three years ago. I've always thought she was beautiful.

MR: He was always nice to me. Always smiling at me and greeting me—even before "Marimar." Once on SOP, he told me: "You're becoming pretty now." So I asked him: "Why? Was I ugly before?"

What did you find out about Richard?

MR: That he is nonkape (nongi). On the set, he kept asking me if I were hungry. So I texted him once. I told him I was craving pancakes. He actually asked someone to buy pancakes for me.

What do you plan to give Richard on his birthday (Jan. 21)?

MR: One box of Tic-tac flights (the joint drink they are both endorsing). Apple flavor (laughs).

RG: I'll give her Pineapple flavor naman on her birthday (Aug. 12).

After working on this movie, what did you learn about Marian?

RG: I realized that she's hardworking. From "Marimar," she went straight to SOP. Even if she lacked sleep, she remained dedicated and full of energy. I am also amazed that she likes singing even if singing doesn't like her (laughs).

MR: We had a shoot in a bar once. Since I was in a private room, I thought other people wouldn't hear my voice. When I got out, they kept teasing me: "God is really fair. He didn't give you everything."

RG: She got high scores on the videoke machine. That was the shocking part!

RICHARD laughs pancakes for Marian remark.

'Oscars'...

From page B6

plete with an enthusiastic audience of more than 3,000 after a red carpet arrival of assembly dressed performers.

In their 25th year, the awards have become the industry's top celebration.

"It's a thankless business," said Evan Bayer, 43, who won Best Actor. "You don't get a lot of feedback."

Film studios and actors say the awards are important to gain attention when there is so much sex on film these days. "Sex get a lot more work," said Jenny Hendrix, in the stinking Sir Ben Stone.

For many it is not easy to garner attention when widespread body enhancement procedures gives many performers a uniform look.

Mira Hartley, who won the AFA Best Actress award for 1987 for "Terrible Dan Dreiser" was skeptical. "Nothing has consistently shown that it helps anybody," she said.

Many say the awards add legitimacy to an industry that is still often dismissed by the mainstream.

"We've come out of the woodwards," said Randy Spears, 46, a 22-year veteran of the business. "Our audience is not the universe record says on." Reuters

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etc

2nd avenue

JACK
GLOBAL DESTINY CH. 32

'Oscars of porn' no longer easy to win

LAS VEGAS—STARS AND PRODUCERS OF the US adult film industry gathered in Las Vegas this weekend for an annual awards dubbed the "Oscars of porn," honoring the best in the racy genre but it was hard to tell in an occupation with so much sex to reward these days.

Even insiders admit the thought of viewing even a fraction of the 12,000 porn films made in the United States last year to choose award winners is a specific sexual categories was a less than enviable task.

"That is hell," said Jay Grdina, president of Club Jenna Inc., a division of Playboy. "I'd shoot myself in my head before I'd go do that again."

Asked to justify the show-hard-core contest. He has worked on hundreds of movies behind the camera, and starred in others with his on-screen lover, pornstar Jenna Jameson, perhaps the best-known name in the history of adult films.

Videotapes, Internet conversations, DVDs and Internet advertising created an environment that in the US saw film business since the 1980s.

Paul Fishbein, publisher of Adult Video News, said his staff views 8,000 movies a year to find the best of the crop. "It's a very long, horrible process," Fishbein said in an interview, saying he has 10 people devoted to the task full-time.

The repetitive viewing is the understanding of the event held at a strip Las Vegas hotel on Saturday night cere

JENNA Jameson

POWER PLANT CINEMA

I AM LEGEND PG13	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS 2	THE HEARTBREAK KID R13
SWEENEY TODD R18	D-WAR PG13	NATIONAL TREASURE 2

NOW SHOWING

AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	1 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	2 I AM LEGEND	3 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 2	4 SWEENEY TODD
GLORIETTA 4	1 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 2	2 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	3 SWEENEY TODD	
	4 D-WAR	5 I COULD NEVER BE YOUR WOMAN	6 THE HEARTBREAK KID	7 I AM LEGEND
GREENBELT 1	1 SWEENEY TODD	2 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 2		
GREENBELT 3	1 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	2 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 2		
	3 SWEENEY TODD	4 THE HEARTBREAK KID	5 I AM LEGEND	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 2	2 I AM LEGEND		
	3 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	4 SWEENEY TODD	5 THE HEARTBREAK KID	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 THE HEARTBREAK KID	2 SWEENEY TODD	3 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	4 I AM LEGEND
MARKET! MARKET!	1 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 2	2 THE HEARTBREAK KID		
	3 SWEENEY TODD	4 I AM LEGEND	5 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	
TRINOMA	1 I COULD NEVER BE YOUR WOMAN	2 THE HEARTBREAK KID	3 NATIONAL TREASURE: BOOK OF SECRETS	4 SWEENEY TODD
	5 ALVIN & THE CHIPMUNKS 2	6 D-WAR	7 I AM LEGEND	

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

- Glorietta — WELCOME 2008 SALE, January 11 to February 3
- Greenbelt — WELCOME 2008 SALE, January 11 to February 3
- Alabang Town Center — Latest Sale, January 10 & 20, Activity Center
- Ayala Center Cebu — Fabuyan sa Sayan, January 10, 7am; South Surface Parking
- Market! Market! — Arnel & The Chipmunks Live at Market! Market!, January 10 & 20, 11:00pm, 3:00pm & 8:00pm, Activity Center
- Ayala Malls Manila Bay — Repertory Philippines presents THOMAS and the WIZARD, January 11 to 27, 2007
- Ayala Malls Feliz — Kwentuhan sa Feliz(mas) Art!, Paintings by Jose Luna, Fernando Amorsolo, and Fernando Zobel
- Tri Noma — WELCOME 2008 SALE, January 11 to February 3, Cheese Rice Brevity, Ark Pax, January 17 & 18, Trinoma Activity Center

ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS

FUNTERTAINMENT ACTIVITY

Watch ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS at Glorietta 4 and Glorietta 1 Cinemas on January 19 and 20, 2008 & enjoy the fun activities from 1 pm - 5 pm at the Glorietta 4 cinema lobby

FACE PAINTING • BALLOON TWISTING
TIMEZONE ANIMAL RIDE
MASCOT PARADE

Plus! Meet & Greet ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS! Live at the Glorietta 4 cinema lobby on January 19 starting 4 PM

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2008 SALE
JANUARY 11 TO FEBRUARY 3
Big discounts await you at participating stores.

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Greenbelt
Alabang Town Center
Market! Market!
Trinoma

glorietta GREENBELT